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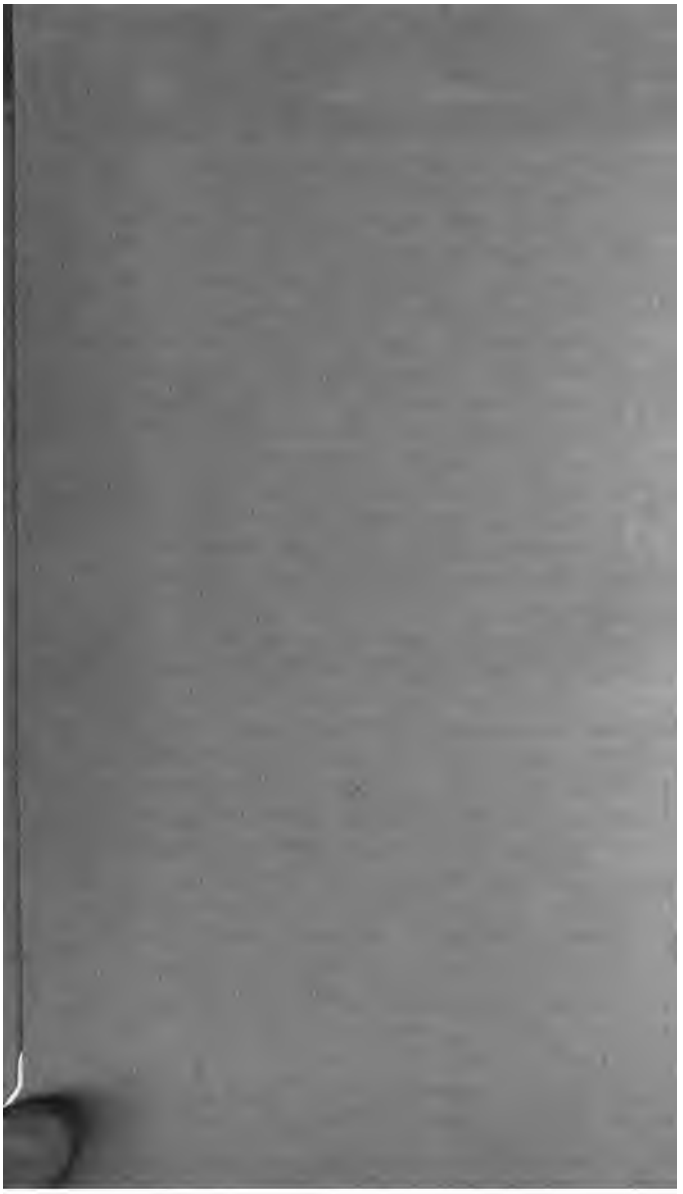

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OF

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THE

LIFE AND WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER.

VOL. III.

...n by J. D. Harding.

Herford, near Huntingdon.

"Thou wert too good to live on Earth with me
And I not good enough to die with thee." [illegible]

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
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THE WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER

HIS

LIFE AND LETTERS

BY WILLIAM HAYLEY ESQ.

NOW FIRST COMPLETED BY THE INTRODUCTION OF

COWPER'S PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE.

EDITED BY

THE REV. T. S. GRIMSHAWE, A.M.

RECTOR OF BURTON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, AND VICAR OF
RIDDENHAM, BEDFORDSHIRE, AUTHOR OF THE LIFE OF THE REV. LEGH RICHMOND.

Letters, such as are written from wise men, are, of all the words of men, in my judgment the best. LORD BACON.

VOL. III.

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LIFE OF COWPER.

Part the Second—Continued.

THE completion of the second volume of Cowper's poems formed an important period in his literary history. It was the era of the establishment of his poetical fame. His first volume had already laid the foundation; the second raised the superstructure, which has secured for him a reputation as honourable as it is likely to be lasting. He was more particularly indebted for this distinction to his inimitable production, "The Task," a work which every succeeding year has increasingly stamped with the seal of public approbation. If we inquire into the causes of its celebrity, they are to be found not merely in the multitude of poetical beauties, scattered throughout the poem; it is the faithful delineation of nature and of the scenes of real life; it is the vein of pure and elevated morality, the exquisite sensibility of feeling, and the powerful appeals to the heart and conscience, which constitute its great charm

and interest. The court, the town, and the country, all united in its praise, because conscience and nature never suffer their rights to be extinguished, except in minds the most perverted or depraved. These rights are coeval with our birth; they grow with our growth, and yield only to that universal decree, which levels taste, perception, and every moral feeling with the dust; and which will finally dissolve the whole system of created nature, and merge time itself in eternity.

Cowper's second volume, containing his "Task," and "Tyrocinium," to which some smaller pieces were afterwards attached, was ready for the press in November, 1784,* though its publication was delayed till June 1785. The close of a literary undertaking is always contemplated as an event of great interest to the feelings of an author. It is the termination of his labours and the commencement of his hopes and fears. Gibbon the historian has thought proper to record the precise hour and day, in which he concluded his laborious work of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," with feelings of a mingled and impressive character.

"I have presumed," he says, "to mark the moment of conception: I shall now commemorate the hour of my final deliverance. It was on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page, in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen,"

* See vol. ii. p. 177.

took several turns in a *berceau*, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and, perhaps, the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind, by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that, whatever might be the future date of my history, the life of the historian might be short and precarious."*

These chastened feelings are implanted by a Divine Power, to check the pride and exultation of genius, and to maintain the mind in lowly humility. Nor is Pope's reflection less just and affecting: "When I am gone," he observes, "the same sun will continue to shine, the same flowers to bloom, and the plants spring as green; and nature will carry on her revolutions, and time have its vicissitudes, as though I had never been."†

What then is the moral we have to learn? If life be so evanescent, if its toils and labours, its sorrows and joys, so quickly pass away, it becomes us to leave some memorial behind, that we have not lived unprofitably either to others or to our-

* See Life and Writings of Edward Gibbon, p. 30, prefixed to his "Decline and Fall," &c.

† See Pope's Letters. The words are quoted from recollection.

selves; to keep the mind free from prejudice, the heart from passion, and the life from error; to enlighten the ignorant, to raise the fallen, and to comfort the depressed; to scatter round us the endearments of kindness, and diffuse a spirit of righteousness, of benevolence, and of truth; to enjoy the sunshine of an approving conscience, and the blessedness of inward joy and peace; that thus, when the closing scene shall at length arrive, the ebbings of the dissolving frame may be sustained by the triumph of christian hope, and death prove the portal of immortality.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Jan. 5, 1785.

* * * * *

I have observed, and you must have had occasion to observe it oftener than I, that when a man who once seemed to be a Christian has put off that character and resumed his old one, he loses, together with the grace which he seemed to possess, the most amiable part of the character that he resumes. The best features of his natural face seem to be struck out, that after having worn religion only as a handsome mask he may make a more disgusting appearance than he did before he assumed it.

According to your request, I subjoin my epitar on Dr. Johnson; at least I mean to do it, if a dru

* Private Correspondence.

which at this moment announces the arrrival of a giant in the town, will give me leave.

Yours,

W. C.

EPITAPH ON DR. JOHNSON.

Here Johnson lies—a sage, by all allow'd,
Whom to have bred may well make England proud;
Whose prose was eloquence by wisdom taught,
The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought;
Whose verse may claim, grave, masculine, and strong,
Superior praise to the mere poet's song;
Who many a noble gift from Heaven possess'd,
And faith at last—alone worth all the rest.
O man immortal by a double prize,
By fame on earth, by glory in the skies!

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Jan. 15, 1785.

My dear William—Your letters are always welcome. You can always either find something to say, or can amuse me and yourself with a sociable and friendly way of saying nothing. I never found that a letter was the more easily written, because the writing of it had been long delayed. On the contrary, experience has taught me to answer soon, that I may do it without difficulty. It is in vain to wait for an accumulation of materials in a situation such as your's and mine, productive of few events. At the end of our expectations we shall find ourselves as poor as at the beginning.

I can hardly tell you with any certainty of infor-

mation, upon what terms Mr. Newton and I ma
be supposed to stand at present. A month (I be
lieve) has passed, since I heard from him. But m
friseur, having been in London in the course of thi
week, whence he returned last night, and havin
called at Hoxton, brought me his love and a
excuse for his silence, which, he said, had bee
occasioned by the frequency of his preachings a
this season. He was not pleased that my manu
script was not first transmitted to him, and I hav
cause to suspect that he was even mortified at bein
informed that a certain inscribed poem was no
inscribed to himself. But we shall jumble togethe
again, as people that have an affection for eac
other at bottom, notwithstanding now and then
slight disagreement, always do.

I know not whether Mr. —— has acted in co
sequence of your hint, or whether, not needing or
he transmitted to us his bounty before he h
received it. He has however sent us a note
twenty pounds; with which we have perform
wonders in behalf of the ragged and the star
He is a most extraordinary young man, and, thc
I shall probably never see him, will always ha
niche in the museum of my reverential rem
brance.

The death of Dr. Johnson has set a tho
scribblers to work, and me among the rest.
I lay in bed, waiting till I could reasonably
that the parlour might be ready for me, I in
the Muse and composed the following epitap

* The same which has been inserted in the preceding

It is destined, I believe, to the "Gentleman's Magazine, which I consider as a respectable repository for small matters, which, when entrusted to a newspaper, can expect but the duration of a day. But, Nichols having at present a small piece of mine in his hands, not yet printed, (it is called the Poplar Field, and I suppose you have it,) I wait till his obstetrical aid has brought that to light, before I send him a new one. In his last he published my epitaph upon Tiney;* which, I likewise imagine, has been long in your collection.

Not a word yet from Johnson; I am easy however upon the subject, being assured that, so long as his own interest is at stake, he will not want a monitor to remind him of the proper time to publish.

You and your family have our sincere love. Forget not to present my respectful compliments to Miss Unwin, and, if you have not done it already, thank her on my part for the very agreeable narrative of Lunardi. He is a young man, I presume, of great good sense and spirit, (his letters at least and his enterprising turn bespeak him such,) a man qualified to shine not only among the stars,† but in the more useful though humbler sphere of terrestrial occupation.

* One of Cowper's favourite hares·

"Here lies, whom hound did ne'er pursue,
Nor swifter greyhound follow," &c.

See POEMS, vol. ii.

† Lunardi's name is associated with the aëronauts of that time.

I have been crossing the channel in a balloon ever since I read of that achievement by Blanchard.* I have an insatiable thirst to know the philosophical reason why his vehicle had like to have fallen into the sea, when, for aught that appears, the gas was not at all exhausted. Did not the extreme cold condense the inflammable air, and cause the globe to collapse? Tell me, and be 'mid Apollo for ever!

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

The incident connected with the Poplar Field mentioned in the former part of the above letter is recorded in the verses. The place where the poplars grew is called Lavendon Mills, about a mile from Olney; it was one of Cowper's favourite walks. After a long absence, on revisiting the spot, he found the greater part of his beloved trees lying prostrate on the ground. Four only survived and they have but recently shared the same fate. But poetry can dignify the minutest events, and convert the ardour of hope or the pang of disappointment into an occasion for pouring forth the sweet melody of song. It is to the above incident that we are indebted for the following verses, which unite the charm of simple imagery with a beautiful and affecting moral at the close.

* Blanchard, accompanied by Dr. Jeffries, took his departure for Calais from the Castle at Dover. When within five or six miles of the French coast, the balloon fell rapidly towards the sea, and, had it not been lightened and a breeze sprung up, they must have perished in the waves.

THE POPLAR FIELD.

The poplars are felled, farewell to the shade,
And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade;
The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,
Nor Ouse on his bosom their image receives.

Twelve years have elaps'd, since I last took a view
Of my favourite field, and the bank where they grew;
And now in the grass behold they are laid,
And the tree is my seat, that once lent me a shade.

The blackbird has fled to another retreat,
Where the hazels afford him a screen from the heat,
And the scene, where his melody charm'd me before,
Resounds with his sweet-flowing ditty nc more.

My fugitive years are hasting away,
And I must ere long lie as lowly as they,
With a turf on my breast and a stone at my head,
Ere another such grove shall arise in its stead.

The change both my heart and my fancy employs;
I reflect on the frailty of man and his joys;
Short-lived as we are, yet our pleasures, we see,
Have a still shorter date, and die sooner than we.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

Olney, Jan. 22, 1785.

My dear Friend—The departure of the long frost, by which we were pinched and squeezed together for three weeks, is a most agreeable circumstance. The

* Private Correspondence.

weather is now (to speak poetically) genial and jocund; and the appearance of the sun, after an eclipse, peculiarly welcome. For, were it not that I have a gravel walk about sixty yards long, where I take my daily exercise, I should be obliged to look at a fine day through the window, without any other enjoyment of it; a country rendered impassable by frost, that has been at last resolved into rottenness, keeps me so close a prisoner. Long live the inventors and improvers of balloons! It is always clear overhead, and by and by we shall use no other road.

How will the Parliament employ themselves when they meet?—to any purpose, or to none, or only to a bad one? They are utterly out of my favour. I despair of them altogether. Will they pass an act for the cultivation of the royal wildernesses? Will they make an effectual provision for a northern fishery? Will they establish a new sinking fund that shall infallibly pay off the national debt? I say nothing about a more equal representation,* because, unless they bestow upon private gentlemen of no property the privilege of voting, I stand no chance of ever being represented myself. Will they achieve all these wonders, or none of them? And shall I derive no other advantage from the great Wittena-Gemot of the nation, than merely to

* Mr. Pitt had introduced, at this time, his celebrated bill for effecting a reform in the national representation; the leading feature of which was to transfer the elective franchise from the smaller and decayed boroughs to the larger towns. The proposition was, however, rejected by a considerable majority.

read their debates, for twenty folios of which I would not give one farthing?

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Feb. 7, 1785.

My dear Friend—We live in a state of such uninterrupted retirement, in which incidents worthy to be recorded occur so seldom, that I always sit down to write with a discouraging conviction that I have nothing to say. The event commonly justifies the presage. For, when I have filled my sheet, I find that I have said nothing. Be it known to you, however, that I may now at least communicate a piece of intelligence to which you will not be altogether indifferent; that I have received and returned to Johnson the two first proof-sheets of my new publication. The business was dispatched indeed a fortnight ago, since when I have heard from him no further. From such a beginning, however, I venture to prognosticate the progress, and in due time the conclusion, of the matter.

In the last Gentleman's Magazine my Poplar Field appears. I have accordingly sent up two pieces more, a Latin translation of it, which you have never seen, and another on a rose-bud, the neck of which I inadvertently broke, which whether you have seen or not I know not. As fast as Nichols prints off the poems I send him, I send him new *ones*. My remittance usually consists of

two; and he publishes one of them at a time. I may indeed furnish him at this rate, without putting myself to any great inconvenience. For my last supply was transmitted to him in August, and is but now exhausted.

I communicate the following at your mother's instance, who will suffer no part of my praise to be sunk in oblivion. A certain lord has hired a house at Clifton, in our neighbourhood, for a hunting seat. There he lives at present with his wife and daughter. They are an exemplary family in some respects, and (I believe) an amiable one in all. The Reverend Mr. Jones, the curate of that parish, who often dines with them by invitation on a Sunday, recommended my volume to their reading; and his lordship, after having perused a part of it, expressed an ardent desire to be acquainted with the author, from motives which my great modesty will not suffer me to particularize. Mr. Jones, however, like a wise man, informed his lordship that, for certain special reasons and causes, I had declined going into company for many years, and that therefore he must not hope for my acquaintance. His lordship most civilly subjoined that he was sorry for it. "And is that all?" say you. Now were I to hear you say so, I should look foolish and say, "Yes." But, having you at a distance, I snap my fingers at you and say, "No, that is not all." Mr. ———, who favours us now and then with his company in an evening as usual, was not long since discoursing with that eloquence which is so peculiar to himself, on the many providential

interpositions that had taken place in his favour. "He had wished for many things," he said, "which, at the time when he formed these wishes, seemed distant and improbable, some of them indeed impossible. Among other wishes that he had indulged, one was that he might be connected with men of genius and ability—and, in my connexion with this worthy gentleman," said he, turning to me, "that wish, I am sure, is amply gratified." You may suppose that I felt the sweat gush out upon my forehead when I heard this speech; and if you do, you will not be at all mistaken. So much was I delighted with the delicacy of that incense.

Thus far I proceeded easily enough; and here I laid down my pen, and spent some minutes in recollection, endeavouring to find some subject with which I might fill the little blank that remains. But none presents itself. Farewell therefore, and remember those who are mindful of you!

Present our love to all your comfortable fireside, and believe me ever most affectionately yours,

W. C.

They that read Greek with the accents, would pronounce the ε in φιλεω as an η. But I do not hold with that practice, though educated in it. I should therefore utter it just as I do the Latin word *filio*, taking the quantity for my guide.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Feb. 19, 1785.

My dear Friend—I am obliged to you for apprising me of the various occasions of delay to which your letters are liable. Furnished with such a key, I shall be able to account for any accidental tardiness, without supposing any thing worse than that you yourself have been interrupted, or that your messenger has not been punctual.

Mr. Teedon has just left us.* He came to exhibit to us a specimen of his kinsman's skill in the art of book-binding. The book on which he had exercised his ingenuity was your Life. You did not indeed make a very splendid appearance; but, considering that you were dressed by an untaught artificer, and that it was his first attempt, you had no cause to be dissatisfied. The young man has evidently the possession of talents, by which he might shine for the benefit of others and for his own, did not his situation smother him. He can make a dulcimer, tune it, play upon it, and with common advantages would undoubtedly have been able to make a harpsichord. But unfortunately he lives where neither the one nor the other is at all in vogue. He can convert the shell of a cocoa-nut into a decent drinking-cup; but, when he has done, he must either fill it at the pump, or use it merely as an ornament of his own mantel-tree. In like

* Private Correspondence.

† He was an intelligent schoolmaster at Olney.

manner, he can bind a book; but, if he would have books to bind, he must either make them or buy them, for we have few or no literati at Olney. Some men have talents with which they do mischief; and others have talents with which, if they do no mischief to others, at least they can do but little good to themselves. They are however always a blessing, unless by our own folly we make them a curse; for, if we cannot turn them to a lucrative account, they may however furnish us, at many a dull season, with the means of innocent amusement. Such is the use that Mr. Killingworth makes of his; and this evening we have, I think, made him happy, having furnished him with two octavo volumes, in which the principles and practice of all ingenious arts are inculcated and explained. I make little doubt that, by the half of it, he will in time be able to perform many feats, for which he will never be one farthing the richer, but by which nevertheless himself and his kin will be much diverted.

The winter returning upon us at this late season with redoubled severity is an event unpleasant even to us who are well furnished with fuel, and seldom feel much of it, unless when we step into bed or get out of it; but how much more formidable to the poor! When ministers talk of resources, that word never fails to send my imagination into the mud-wall cottages of our poor at Olney. There I find assembled in one individual the miseries of age, sickness, and the extremest penury. We have many such instances around us. The parish perhaps allows such an one a shilling a week; but, being

numbed with cold and crippled by disease, she cannot possibly earn herself another. Such persons therefore suffer all that famine can inflict upon them, only that they are not actually starved; a catastrophe which to many of them I suppose would prove a happy release. One cause of all this misery is the exorbitant taxation with which the country is encumbered, so that to the poor the few pence they are able to procure have almost lost their value. Yet the budget will be opened soon, and soon we shall hear of resources. But I could conduct the statesman who rolls down to the House in a chariot as splendid as that of Phaëton into scenes that, if he had any sensibility for the woes of others, would make him tremble at the mention of the word.—This, however, is not what I intended when I began this paragraph. I was going to observe that, of all the winters we have passed at Olney, and this is the seventeenth, the present has confined us most. Thrice, and but thrice, since the middle of October, have we escaped into the fields for a little fresh air and a little change of motion. The last time indeed it was at some peril that we did it, Mrs. Unwin having slipped into a ditch, and, though I performed the part of an active 'squire upon the occasion, escaped out of it upon her hands and knees.

If the town afford any other news than I here send you, it has not reached me yet. I am in perfect health, at least of body, and Mrs. Unwin is tolerably well. Adieu! We remember you always, you and yours, with as much affection as *you can* desire; which being said, and said truly,

leaves me quite at a loss for any other conclusion than that of

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL ESQ.*

Olney, Feb. 27, 1785.

My dear Friend—I write merely to inquire after your health, and with a sincere desire to hear that you are better. Horace somewhere advises his friend to give his client the slip, and come and spend the evening with him. I am not so inconsiderate as to recommend the same measure to you, because we are not such very near neighbours as a trip of that sort requires that we should be. But I do verily wish that you would favour me with just five minutes of the time that properly belongs to your clients, and place it to my account. Employ it, I mean, in telling me that you are better at least, if not recovered.

I have been pretty much indisposed myself since I wrote last; but except in point of strength am now as well as before. My disorder was what is commonly called and best understood by the name of a thorough cold; which being interpreted, no doubt you well know, signifies shiverings, aches, burnings, lassitude, together with many other ills that flesh is heir to. James's powder is my nostrum on all such occasions, and never fails.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

* *Private Correspondence.*

The next letter discovers the playful and sportive wit of Cowper.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, March 19, 1785.

My dear Friend—You will wonder no doubt when I tell you that I write upon a card-table; and will be still more surprised when I add that we breakfast, dine, sup, upon a card-table. In short, it serves all purposes, except the only one for which it was originally designed. The solution of this mystery shall follow, lest it should run in your head at a wrong time, and should puzzle you perhaps when you are on the point of ascending your pulpit: for I have heard you say that at such seasons your mind is often troubled with impertinent intrusions. The round table which we formerly had in use was unequal to the pressure of my superincumbent breast and elbows. When I wrote upon it, it creaked and tilted, and by a variety of inconvenient tricks disturbed the process. The fly-table was too slight and too small; the square dining-table too heavy and too large, occupying, when its leaves were spread, almost the whole parlour; and the sideboard-table, having its station at too great a distance from the fire, and not being easily shifted out of its place and into it again, by reason of its size, was equally unfit for my purpose. The card-table, therefore, which had for sixteen years been banished as mere lumber; the card-table, which is

* Private Correspondence.

overed with green baize, and is therefore preferable
any other that has a slippery surface; the card-
ble, that stands firm and never totters,—is ad-
anced to the honour of assisting me upon my scrib-
ling occasions, and, because we choose to avoid the
ouble of making frequent changes in the position
f our household furniture, proves equally service-
ble upon all others, It has cost us now and then
he downfall of a glass: for, when covered with a
able-cloth, the fish-ponds are not easily discerned;
nd, not being seen, are sometimes as little thought
f. But, having numerous good qualities which
bundantly compensate that single inconvenience,
e spill upon it our coffee, our wine, and our ale,
ithout murmuring, and resolve that it shall be our
able still to the exclusion of all others. Not to be
edious, I will add but one more circumstance upon
he subject, and that only because it will impress
pon you, as much as any thing that I have said, a
ense of the value we set upon its escritorial capa-
ity. Parched and penetrated on one side by the
eat of the fire, it has opened into a large fissure,
hich pervades not the moulding of it only, but the
ery substance of the plank. At the mouth of this
perture a sharp splinter presents itself, which, as
ure as it comes in contact with a gown or an apron,
ears it. It happens unfortunately to be on that
ide of this excellent and never-to-be-forgotten table
hich Mrs. Unwin sweeps with her apparel, almost
s often as she rises from her chair. The conse-
uences need not, to use the fashionable phrase, be
iven in detail: but the needle sets all to rights;

and the card-table still holds possession of its functions without a rival.

Clean roads and milder weather have once more released us, opening a way for our escape into our accustomed walks. We have both I believe been sufferers by such a long confinement. Mrs. Unwin has had a nervous fever all the winter, and I a stomach that has quarrelled with every thing, and not seldom even with its bread and butter. Her complaint I hope is at length removed; but mine seems more obstinate, giving way to nothing that I can oppose to it, except just in the moment when the opposition is made. I ascribe this malady—both our maladies, indeed—in a great measure to our want of exercise. We have each of us practised more in other days than lately we have been able to take; and, for my own part, till I was more than thirty years old, it was almost essential to my comfort to be perpetually in motion. My constitution therefore misses, I doubt not, its usual aids of this kind; and, unless for purposes which I cannot foresee, Providence should interpose to prevent it, will probably reach the moment of its dissolution the sooner for being so little disturbed. A vitiated digestion I believe always terminates, if not cured, in the production of some chronical disorder. In several I have known it produce a dropsy. But no matter. Death is inevitable; and whether we die to-day or to-morrow, a watery death or a dry one, is of no consequence. The state of our spiritual health is all. Could I discover a few more symptoms of convalescence there, this body might moulder

into its original dust without one sigh from me. Nothing of all this did I mean to say; but I have said it, and must now seek another subject.

One of our most favourite walks is spoiled. The spinney is cut down to the stumps—even the lilacs and the syringas, to the stumps. Little did I think, (though indeed I might have thought it,) that the trees which skreened me from the sun last summer would this winter be employed in roasting potatoes and boiling tea-kettles for the poor of Olney. But so it has proved; and we ourselves have at this moment more than two waggon-loads of them in our wood-loft.

Such various services can trees perform;
Whom once they skreen'd from heat, in time they warm.

A letter from Manchester reached our town last Sunday, addressed to the mayor or other chief magistrate of Olney. The purport of it was to excite him and his neighbours to petition Parliament against the concessions to Ireland that Government has in contemplation. Mr. Maurice Smith, as constable, took the letter. But whether that most respectable personage amongst us intends to comply with the terms of it, or not, I am ignorant. For myself, however, I can pretty well answer, that I shall sign no petition of the sort; both because I do not think myself competent to a right understanding of the question, and because it appears to me that, whatever be the event, no place in England can be less concerned in it than Olney.

We rejoice that you are all well. Our love at-

tends Mrs. Newton and yourself, and the young ladies.

I am yours, my dear friend, as usual,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, March 20, 1785.

My dear William—I thank you for your letter. It made me laugh, and there are not many things capable of being contained within the dimensions of a letter for which I see cause to be more thankful. I was pleased too to see my opinion of his lordship's *nonchalance*, upon a subject that you had so much at heart, completely verified. I do not know that the eye of a nobleman was ever dissected. I cannot help supposing, however, that were that organ, as it exists in the head of such a personage, to be accurately examined, it would be found to differ materially in its construction from the eye of a commoner; so very different is the view that men in an elevated and in an humble station have of the same object. What appears great, sublime, beautiful, and important to you and to me, when submitted to my lord or his grace, and submitted too with the utmost humility, is either too minute to be visible at all, or, if seen, seems trivial and of no account. My supposition therefore seems not altogether chimerical.

In two months I have corrected proof-sheets to *the amount* of ninety-three pages, and no more. In

other words, I have received three packets. Nothing is quick enough for impatience, and I suppose that the impatience of an author has the quickest of all possible movements. It appears to me, however, that at this rate we shall not publish till next autumn. Should you happen therefore to pass Johnson's door, pop in your head as you go, and just insinuate to him that, were his remittances rather more frequent, that frequency would be no inconvenience to me. I much expected one this evening, a fortnight having now elapsed since the arrival of the last. But none came, and I felt myself a little mortified. I took up the newspaper, however, and read it. There I found that the emperor and the Dutch are, after all their negotiations, going to war. Such reflections as these struck me. A great part of Europe is going to be involved in the greatest of all calamities: troops are in motion—artillery is drawn together—cabinets are busied in contriving schemes of blood and devastation—thousands will perish who are incapable of understanding the dispute, and thousands who, whatever the event may be, are little more interested in it than myself, will suffer unspeakable hardships in the course of the quarrel.—Well! Mr. Poet, and how then? You have composed certain verses, which you are desirous to see in print, and, because the impression seems to be delayed, you are displeased, not to say dispirited. Be ashamed of yourself! you live in a world in which your feelings may find worthier subjects—be concerned for the havoc of nations,

and mourn over your retarded volume, when you find a dearth of more important tragedies!

You postpone certain topics of conference to our next meeting. When shall it take place? I do not wish for you just now, because the garden is a wilderness, and so is all the country around us. In May we shall have 'sparagus, and weather in which we may stroll to Weston; at least we may hope for it; therefore come in May; you will find us happy to receive you and as much of your fair household as you can bring with you.

We are very sorry for your uncle's indisposition. The approach of summer seems however to be in his favour, that season being of all remedies for the rheumatism, I believe, the most effectual.

I thank you for your intelligence concerning the celebrity of John Gilpin. You may be sure that it was agreeable; but your own feelings, on occasion of that article, pleased me most of all. Well, my friend, be comforted! You had not an opportunity of saying publicly, "I know the author." But the author himself will say as much for you soon, and perhaps will feel in doing so a gratification equal to your own.*

In the affair of face-painting, I am precisely of your opinion.

Adieu,

W. C.

* The poem of "The Task" was inscribed to Mr. Unwin.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, April 9, 1785.

My dear Friend—In a letter to the printer of the Northampton Mercury, we have the following history:—An ecclesiastic of the name of Zichen, German superintendent or Lutheran bishop of Zetterfeldt, in the year 1779 delivered to the courts of Hanover and Brunswick a prediction to the following purport: that an earthquake is at hand, the greatest and most destructive ever known; that it will originate in the Alps and in their neighbourhood, especially at Mount St. Gothard; at the foot of which mountain it seems four rivers have their source, of which the Rhine is one †—the names of the rest I have forgotten—they are all to be swallowed up; that the earth will open into an immense fissure, which will divide all Europe, reaching from the aforesaid mountain to the states of Holland; that the Zuyder Sea will be absorbed in the gulf; that the Bristol Channel will be no more; in short, that the north of Europe will be separated from the south, and that seven thousand cities, towns, and villages will be destroyed. This prediction he delivered at the aforesaid courts in the

* Private Correspondence.

† This is a geographical error. The Rhine takes its rise in the canton of the Grisons. It is the Rhone which derives its source from the western flank of Mount St. Gothard, where there are three springs, which unite their waters to that torrent. The river Aar rises not far distant, but there is no other river.—EDIT.

year seventy-nine, asserting that in February following the commotion would begin, and that by Easter 1786 the whole would be accomplished. Accordingly, between the 15th and 27th of February, in the year eighty, the public gazettes and newspapers took notice of several earthquakes in the Alps, and in the regions at their foot; particularly about Mount St. Gothard. From this partial fulfilment, Mr. O—— argues the probability of a complete one, and exhorts the world to watch and be prepared. He adds moreover that Mr. Zichen was a pious man, a man of science, and a man of sense; and that when he gave in his writing he offered to swear to it—I suppose, as a revelation from above. He is since dead.

Nothing in the whole affair pleases me so much as that he has named a short day for the completion of his prophecy. It is tedious work to hold the judgment in suspense for many years; but any body methinks may wait with patience till a twelvemonth shall pass away, especially when an earthquake of such magnitude is in question. I do not say that Mr. Zichen is deceived; but, if he be not, I will say that he is the first modern prophet who has not both been a subject of deception himself and a deceiver of others. A year will show.

Our love attends all your family. Believe me, my dear friend, affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, April 22, 1785.

My dear Friend—When I received your account of the great celebrity of John Gilpin, I felt myself both flattered and grieved. Being man, and having in my composition all the ingredients of which other men are made, and vanity among the rest, it pleased me to reflect that I was on a sudden become so famous, and that all the world was busy inquiring after me: but, the next moment, recollecting my former self, and that thirteen years ago, as harmless as John's history is, I should not then have written it, my spirits sank and I was ashamed of my success. Your letter was followed the next post by one from Mr. Unwin. You tell me that I am rivalled by Mrs. Bellamy;† and he, that I have a competitor for fame not less formidable in the Learned Pig. Alas! what is an author's popularity worth in a world that can suffer a prostitute on one side, and a pig on the other, to eclipse his brightest glories? I am therefore sufficiently humbled by these considerations; and, unless I should hereafter be ordained to engross the public attention by means more magnificent than a song, am persuaded that I shall suffer no real detriment by their applause. I have produced many things, under the influence of despair, which hope would not have permitted

* Private Correspondence.

† A celebrated actress, who wrote her memoirs, which were much read at that time.

to spring. But, if the soil of that melancholy, in which I have walked so long, has thrown up here and there an unprofitable fungus, it is well at least that it is not chargeable with having brought forth poison. Like you, I see or think I can see, that Gilpin may have his use. Causes, in appearance trivial, produce often the most beneficial consequences; and perhaps my volumes may now travel to a distance, which, if they had not been ushered into the world by that notable horseman, they would never have reached. Our temper differs somewhat from that of the ancient Jews. They would neither dance nor weep. We indeed weep not, if a man mourn unto us; but I must needs say that, if he pipe, we seem disposed to dance with the greatest alacrity.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, April 30, 1785.

My dear Friend—I return you thanks for a letter so warm with the intelligence of the celebrity of John Gilpin. I little thought, when I mounted him upon my Pegasus, that he would become so famous. I have learned also from Mr. Newton that he is equally renowned in Scotland, and that a lady there had undertaken to write a second part, on the subject of Mrs. Gilpin's return to London; but, not succeeding in it as she wished, she dropped it. He

tells me likewise that the head master of St. Paul's school (who he is I know not) has conceived, in consequence of the entertainment that John has afforded him, a vehement desire to write to me. Let us hope he will alter his mind; for, should we even exchange civilities on the occasion, Tirocinium will spoil all. The great estimation however in which this knight of the stone-bottles is held may turn out a circumstance propitious to the volume, of which his history will make a part. Those events that prove the prelude to our greatest success are often apparently trivial in themselves, and such as seemed to promise nothing. The disappointment that Horace mentions is reversed—We design a mug, and it proves a hogshead. It is a little hard that I alone should be unfurnished with a printed copy of this facetious story. When you visit London next, you must buy the most elegant impression of it, and bring it with you. I thank you also for writing to Johnson. I likewise wrote to him myself. Your letter and mine together have operated to admiration. There needs nothing more but that the effect be lasting, and the whole will soon be printed. We now draw towards the middle of the fifth book of "The Task." The man, Johnson, is like unto some vicious horses that I have known. They would not budge till they were spurred, and when they were spurred they would kick. So did he—his temper was somewhat disconcerted; but his pace was quickened, and I was contented.

I was very much pleased with the following

sentence in Mr. Newton's last,—"I am perfectly satisfied with the propriety of your proceeding as to the publication."—Now, therefore, we are friends again. Now he once more inquires after the work, which, till he had disburthened himself of this acknowledgment, neither he nor I in any of our letters to each other ever mentioned. Some side-wind has wafted to him a report of those reasons by which I justified my conduct. I never made a secret of them. Both your mother and I have studiously deposited them with those who we thought were most likely to transmit them to him. They wanted only a hearing, which once obtained, their solidity and cogency were such that they were sure to prevail.

You mention ——. I formerly knew the man you mention, but his elder brother much better. We were school-fellows, and he was one of a club of seven Westminster men, to which I belonged, who dined together every Thursday. Should it please God to give me ability to perform the poet's part to some purpose, many whom I once called friends, but who have since treated me with a most magnificent indifference, will be ready to take me by the hand again, and some, whom I never held in that estimation, will, like ——, (who was but a boy when I left London,) boast of a connexion with me which they never had. Had I the virtues, and graces, and accomplishments of St. Paul himself, I might have them at Olney, and nobody would care a button about me, yourself and one or two more excepted. Fame begets favour, and one talent,

if it be rubbed a little bright by use and practice, will procure a man more friends than a thousand virtues. Dr. Johnson, (I believe,) in the life of one of our poets, says that he retired from the world flattering himself that he should be regretted. But the world never missed him. I think his observation upon it is that the vacancy made by the retreat of any individual is soon filled up; that a man may always be obscure, if he chooses to be so; and that he who neglects the world will be by the world neglected.

Your mother and I walked yesterday in the Wilderness. As we entered the gate, a glimpse of something white, contained in a little hole in the gate-post, caught my eye. I looked again, and discovered a bird's nest, with two tiny eggs in it. By-and-by they will be fledged, and tailed, and get wing-feathers, and fly. My case is somewhat similar to that of the parent bird. My nest is in a little nook. Here I brood and hatch, and in due time my progeny takes wing and whistles.

We wait for the time of your coming with pleasant expectations.

Yours truly,

W. C.

The following letter records an impressive instance of the instability of human life; and also contains some references, of deep pathos, to his own personal history and feelings.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, May, 1785.

My dear Friend I do not know that I shall send you news; but, whether it be news or not, it is necessary that I should relate the fact, lest I should omit an article of intelligence important at least at Olney. The event took place much nearer to you than to us, and yet it is possible that no account of it may yet have reached you. —Mr. Ashburner the elder, went to London on Tuesday se'nnight in perfect health and in high spirits, so as to be remarkably cheerful; and was brought home in a hearse the Friday following. Soon after his arrival in town, he complained of an acute pain in his elbow, then in his shoulder, then in both shoulders; was blooded; took two doses of such medicine as an apothecary thought might do him good; and died on Thursday in the morning at ten o'clock. When I first heard the tidings I could hardly credit them; and yet have lived long enough myself to have seen manifold and most convincing proofs that neither health, great strength, nor even youth itself, afford the least security from the stroke of death. It is not common however for men at the age of thirty-six to die so suddenly. I saw him but a few days before, with a bundle of gloves and hatbands under his arm, at the door of Geary Ball, who lay at that

* Private Correspondence.

time a corpse. The following day I saw him march before the coffin, and lead the procession that attended Geary to the grave. He might be truly said to march, for his step was heroic, his figure athletic, and his countenance as firm and confident as if he had been born only to bury others, and was sure never to be buried himself. Such he appeared to me, while I stood at the window and contemplated his deportment; and then he died.

I am sensible of the tenderness and affectionate kindness with which you recollect our past intercourse, and express your hopes of my future restoration. I too within the last eight months have had my hopes, though they have been of short duration, cut off like the foam upon the waters. Some previous adjustments indeed are necessary, before a lasting expectation of comfort can have place in me. There are those persuasions in my mind which either entirely forbid the entrance of hope, or, if it enter, immediately eject it. They are incompatible with any such inmate, and must be turned out themselves before so desirable a guest can possibly have secure possession. This, you say, will be done. It may be, but it is not done yet; nor has a single step in the course of God's dealings with me been taken towards it. If I mend, no creature ever mended so slowly that recovered at last. I am like a slug or snail, that has fallen into a deep well: slug as he is, he performs his descent with an alacrity proportioned to his weight; but he does not crawl up again quite so fast. Mine was a rapid plunge; but my return to daylight, if I am indeed returning, is

leisurely enough. I wish you a swift progress, and a pleasant one, through the great subject that you have in hand;* and set that value upon your letters to which they are in themselves entitled, but which is certainly increased by that peculiar attention which the writer of them pays to me. Were I such as I once was, I should say that I have a claim upon your particular notice which nothing ought to supersede. Most of your other connexions you may fairly be said to have formed by your own act; but your connexion with me was the work of God. The kine that went up with the ark from Bethshemesh left what they loved behind them, in obedience to an impression which to them was perfectly dark and unintelligible.† Your journey to Huntingdon was not less wonderful. He indeed who sent you knew well wherefore, but you knew not. That dispensation therefore would furnish me, as long as we can both remember it, with a plea for some distinction at your hands, had I occasion to use and urge it, which I have not. But I am altered since that time; and if your affection for me had ceased, you might very reasonably justify your change by mine. I can cay nothing for myself at present; but this I can venture to foretell, that, should the restoration of which my friends assure me obtain, I shall undoubtedly love those who have continued to love me, even in a state of transforma-

* Mr. Newton was at this time preparing two volumes of Sermons for the press, on the subject of the Messiah, preached on the occasion of the Commemoration of Handel.

† See 1 Sam. vi. 7—10.

n from my former self, much more than ever. I ubt not that Nebuchadnezzar had friends in his osperity; all kings have many. But when his ils became like eagles' claws, and he ate grass like ı ox, I suppose he had few to pity him.

We are going to pay Mr. Pomfret† a morning sit. Our errand is to see a fine bed of tulips, a ght that I never saw. Fine painting, and God the tist. Mrs. Unwin has something to say in the ver. I leave her therefore to make her own urtesy, and only add that I am yours and Mrs. ewton's

affectionate

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, June 4, 1785.

My dear Friend—Mr. Greatheed had your letter ıe day after we received it.‡ He is a well-bred, greeable young man, and one whose eyes have een opened, I doubt not, for the benefit of others, s well as for his own. He preached at Olney a day r two ago, and I have reason to think with accept- nce and success. One person, at least, who had een in prison some weeks, received his enlarge-

† The Rector at that time of Emberton, near Olney.

* Private Correspondence.

‡ The Rev. Mr. Greatheed was a man of piety and talent, nd much respected in his day. He wrote a short and inte- sting memoir of Cowper.

ment under him. I should have been glad to have been a hearer, but that privilege is not allowed me yet.

My book is at length printed, and I returned the last proof to Johnson on Tuesday. I have ordered a copy to Charles Square, and have directed Johnson to enclose one with it, addressed to John Bacon, Esq. I was obliged to give you this trouble, not being sure of the place of his abode. I have taken the liberty to mention him, as an artist, in terms that he well deserves. The passage was written soon after I received the engraving with which he favoured me,* and while the impression that it made upon me was yet warm. He will therefore excuse the liberty that I have taken, and place it to the account of those feelings which he himself excited.

The walking season is returned. We visit the Wilderness daily. Mr. Throckmorton last summer presented me with a key of his garden. The family are all absent, except the priest and a servant or two; so that the honeysuckles, lilacs, and syringas, are all our own.

We are well, and our united love attends yourselves and the young ladies.

Yours, my dear friend,
With much affection,
W. C.

* The engraving of Bacon's celebrated monument of Lord Chatham, in Westminster Abbey.

The passage alluded to is as follows:—

..... "Bacon there
Gives more than female beauty to a stone,
And Chatham's eloquence to marble lips."

The Task, Book I.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, June 25, 1785.

My dear Friend—I write in a nook that I call my *udoir*. It is a summer-house not much bigger an a sedan-chair, the door of which opens into e garden, that is now crowded with pinks, ses, and honeysuckles, and the window into my ighbour's orchard. It formerly served an apothe- ıry, now dead, as a smoking-room; and under my et is a trap-door which once covered a hole in the round, where he kept his bottles; at present, how- ver, it is dedicated to sublimer uses. Having lined with garden-mats, and furnished it with a table nd two chairs, here I write all that I write in sum- ıer time, whether to my friends or to the public. t is secure from all noise, and a refuge from all in- rusion; for intruders sometimes trouble me in the inter evenings at Olney: but (thanks to my *oudoir!*) I can now hide myself from them. A oet's retreat is sacred: they acknowledge the truth f that proposition, and never presume to violate t.*

* Cowper's summer-house is still in existence. It is a mall, humble building, situated at the back of the premises hich he occupied at Olney, and commanding a full view of he church and of the vicarage-house. Humble however as it ppears, it is approached with those feelings of veneration hich the scene of so many interesting recollections cannot ail to inspire. There he wrote "The Task," and most of his oems, except during the rigour of the winter months. There oo he carried on that epistolary correspondence, which is dis- inguished by so much wit, ease, and gracefulness, and by the

The last sentence puts me in mind to tell you that I have ordered my volume to your door. My bookseller is the most dilatory of all his fraternity, or you would have received it long since. It is more than a month since I returned him the last proof, and consequently since the printing was finished. I sent him the manuscript at the beginning of last November, that he might publish while the town was full, and he will hit the exact moment when it is entirely empty. Patience (you will perceive) is in no situation exempted from the severest trials; a remark that may serve to comfort you under the numberless trials of your own.

W. C.

Cowper again feelingly alludes in the letter which follows, to that absence of mental comfort under which he so habitually laboured.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, June 25, 1785.

My dear Friend—A note that we received from Mr. Scott, by your desire, informing us of the amendment of Mrs. Newton's health, demands our thanks, having relieved us from no little anxiety upon her account. The welcome purport of it was soon after confirmed, so that at present we feel ourselves at

overflowings of a warm and affectionate heart. No traveller seems to enter without considering it to be the shrine of the Muses, and leaving behind a poetical tribute to the memory of so distinguished an author.

* Private Correspondence.

erty to hope that by this time Mrs. Newton's re-
very is complete. Sally's looks do credit to the
of Hoxton. She seems to have lost nothing,
ıer in complexion or dimensions, by her removal
ıce; and, which is still more to the credit of your
at town, she seems in spiritual things also to be
very same Sally whom we knew once at Olney.
ıation therefore is nothing. They who have the
ıns of grace and an art to use them, will thrive
where; others nowhere. More than a few, who
e formerly ornaments of this garden which you
e watered here flourished, and here have seemed
vither. Others, transplanted into a soil appa-
tly less favourable to their growth, either find
exchange an advantage, or at least are not im-
ed by it. Of myself, who had once both leaves
fruit, but who have now neither, I say nothing,
only this,—that when I am overwhelmed with
pair I repine at my barrenness, and think it hard
be thus blighted; but when a glimpse of hope
aks in upon me, I am contented to be the sapless
ıg I am, knowing that He who has commanded
to wither can command me to flourish again when
pleases. My experiences however of this latter
l are rare and transient. The light that reaches
cannot be compared either to that of the sun or
:he moon. It is a flash in a dark night, during
ch the heavens seem opened only to shut again.
Ve inquired, but could not learn, that any thing
norable passed in the last moments of poor Na-
ı. I listened in expectation that he would at
t acknowledge what all who knew him in his

more lively days had so long seen and lamented, his neglect of the best things, and his eager pursuit of riches. But he was totally silent upon that subject. Yet it was evident that the cares of this world had choked in him much of the good seed, and that he was no longer the Nathan whom we have so often heard at the old house, rich in spirit, though poor in expression: whose desires were unutterable in every sense, both because they were too big for language, and because Nathan had no language for them. I believe with you however that he is safe at home. He had a weak head and strong passions, which He who made him well knew, and for which He would undoubtedly make great allowance. The forgiveness of God is large and absolute; so large, that though in general He calls for confession of our sins, He sometimes dispenses with that preliminary, and will not suffer even the delinquent himself to mention his transgression. He has so forgiven it, that He seems to have forgotten it too, and will have the sinner to forget it also. Such instances perhaps may not be common, but I know that there have been such, and it might be so with Nathan.

I know not what Johnson is about, neither do I now inquire. It will be a month to-morrow since I returned him the last proof. He might, I suppose, have published by this time without hurrying himself into a fever, or breaking his neck through the violence of his dispatch. But having never seen the book advertised, I conclude that he has not. Had the Parliament risen at the usual time, he would have *been just too* late, and though it sits longer than

usual, or is likely to do so, I should not wonder if he were too late at last. Dr. Johnson laughs at Savage for charging the still-birth of a poem of his upon the bookseller's delay; yet, when Dr. Johnson had a poem of his own to publish, no man ever discovered more anxiety to meet the market. But I have taken thought about it till I am grown weary of the subject, and at last have placed myself much at my ease upon the cushion of this one resolution, that, if ever I have dealings hereafter with my present manager, we will proceed upon other terms.

Mr. Wright called here last Sunday, by whom Lord Dartmouth made obliging inquiries after the volume, and was pleased to say that he was impatient to see it. I told him that I had ordered a copy to his lordship, which I hoped he would receive, if not soon, at least before he should retire into the country. I have also ordered one to Mr. Barham.

We suffer in this country very much by drought. The corn, I believe, is in most places thin, and the hay harvest amounts in some to not more than the fifth of a crop. Heavy taxes, excessive levies for the poor, and lean acres, have brought our farmers almost to their wits' end; and many who are not farmers are not very remote from the same point of despondency. I do not despond, because I was never much addicted to anxious thoughts about the future in respect of temporals. But I feel myself a little angry with a minister who, when he imposed a tax upon gloves, was not ashamed to call them a luxury. Caps and boots lined with fur are not accounted a luxury *in Russia*, neither can gloves be

reasonably deemed such in a climate sometimes hardly less severe than that. Nature indeed is content with little, and luxury seems, in some respect, rather relative than of any fixed construction. Accordingly it may become in time a luxury for an Englishman to wear breeches, because it is possible to exist without them, and because persons of a moderate income may find them too expensive. I hope however to be hid in the dust before that day shall come; for, having worn them so many years, if they be indeed a luxury, they are such a one as I could very ill spare; yet spare them I must, if I cannot afford to wear them.

We are tolerably well in health, and as to spirits, much as usual—seldom better, sometimes worse.

Yours, my dear friend, affectionately,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, July 9, 1785.

My dear Friend—You wrong your own judgment when you represent it as not to be trusted; and mine, if you suppose that I have that opinion of it. Had you disapproved, I should have been hurt and mortified. No man's disapprobation would have hurt me more. Your favourable sentiments of my book must consequently give me pleasure in the same proportion. By the post, last Sunday, I had a letter from Lord Dartmouth, in which he thanked

* Private Correspondence.

me for my volume, of which he had read only a part. Of that part however he expresses himself in terms with which my authorship has abundant cause to be satisfied; and adds that the specimen has made him impatient for the whole. I have likewise received a letter from a judicious friend of mine in London, and a man of fine taste, unknown to you, who speaks of it in the same language. Fortified by these cordials, I feel myself qualified to face the world without much anxiety, and delivered in a great measure from those fears which I suppose all men feel upon the like occasion.

My first volume I sent, as you may remember, to the Lord Chancellor, accompanied by a friendly but respectful epistle. His Lordship however thought it not worth his while to return me any answer, or to take the least notice of my present. I sent it also to Colman, with whom I once was intimate. He likewise proved too great a man to recollect me; and, though he has published since, did not account it necessary to return the compliment. I have allowed myself to be a little pleased with an opportunity to show them that I resent their treatment of me, and have sent this book to neither of them. They indeed are the former friends to whom I particularly allude in my epistle to Mr. Hill; and it is possible that they may take to themselves a censure that they so well deserve. If not, it matters not; for I shall never have any communication with them hereafter.

If Mr. Bates has found it difficult to furnish you with a motto *to your* volumes, I have no reason to

imagine that I shall do it easily. I shall not leave my books unransacked; but there is something so new and peculiar in the occasion that suggested your subject, that I question whether in all the classics can be found a sentence suited to it. Our sins and follies, in this country, assume a shape that heathen writers had never any opportunity to notice. They deified the dead indeed, but not in the Temple of Jupiter.* The new-made god had an altar of his own; and they conducted the ceremony without sacrilege or confusion. It is possible however, and I think barely so, that somewhat may occur susceptible of accommodation to your purpose; and if it should, I shall be happy to serve you with it.

I told you, I believe, that the spinney has been cut down; and, though it may seem sufficient to have mentioned such an occurrence once, I cannot help recurring to the melancholy theme. Last night, at near nine o'clock, we entered it for the first time this summer. We had not walked many yards in it, before we perceived that this pleasant

* Cowper alludes, in this passage, to the Commemoration of Handel, in Westminster Abbey, and its resemblance to an act of canonization. His censure is doubly recorded; in poetry, as well as in prose.

> "Ten thousand sit
> Patiently present at a sacred song,
> Commemoration mad; content to hear
> (O wonderful effect of Music's power!)
> Messiah's eulogy for Handel's sake.
> But less, methinks, than sacrilege might serve," &c.
>
> The Task, Book vi.

retreat is destined never to be a pleasant retreat again. In one more year, the whole will be a thicket. That which was once the serpentine walk is now in a state of transformation, and is already become as woody as the rest. Poplars and elms without number are springing in the turf. They are now as high as the knee. Before the summer is ended they will be twice as high; and the growth of another season will make them trees. It will then be impossible for any but a sportsman and his dog to penetrate it. The desolation of the whole scene is such that it sunk our spirits. The ponds are dry. The circular one, in front of the hermitage, is filled with flags and rushes; so that if it contains any water, not a drop is visible. The weeping willow at the side of it, the only ornamental plant that has escaped the axe, is dead. The ivy and the moss, with which the hermitage was lined, are torn away; and the very mats that covered the benches have been stripped off, rent in tatters, and trodden under foot. So farewell, spinney; I have promised myself that I will never enter it again. We have both prayed in it: you for me, and I for you. But it is desecrated from this time forth, and the voice of prayer will be heard in it no more. The fate of it in this respect, however deplorable, is not peculiar. The spot where Jacob anointed his pillar, and, which is more apposite, the spot once honoured with the presence of Him who dwelt in the bush, have long since suffered similar disgrace, and are become common ground.

There is great severity in the application of the

text you mention—I am *their music.* But it is not the worse for that. We both approve it highly. The other in Ezekiel does not seem quite so pat. The prophet complains that his word was to the people like a pleasant song, heard with delight, but soon forgotten. At the commemoration, I suppose that the word is nothing, but the music all in all. The Bible however will abundantly supply you with applicable passages. All passages indeed, that animadvert upon the profanation of God's house and worship, seem to present themselves upon the occasion.

Accept our love and best wishes; and believe me, my dear friend, with warm and true affection,

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, July 27, 1785.

My dear William—You and your party left me in a frame of mind that indisposed me much to company. I comforted myself with the hope that I should spend a silent day, in which I should find abundant leisure to indulge sensations, which, though of the melancholy kind, I yet wished to nourish. But that hope proved vain. In less than an hour after your departure, Mr. —— made his appearance at the green-house door. We were obliged to ask him to dinner, and he dined with us. He is an agreeable, sensible, well-bred young man, but with all his recommendations I felt that on that

occasion I could have spared him. So much better are the absent, whom we love much, than the present whom we love a little. I have however made myself amends since, and, nothing else having interfered, have sent many a thought after you.

You had been gone two days, when a violent thunder-storm came over us. I was passing out of the parlour into the hall, with Mungo at my heels, when a flash seemed to fill the room with fire. In the same instant came the clap, so that the explosion was, I suppose, perpendicular to the roof. Mungo's courage upon the tremendous occasion constrained me to smile, in spite of the solemn impression that such an event never fails to affect me with—the moment that he heard the thunder, (which was like the burst of a great gun) with a wrinkled forehead, and with eyes directed to the ceiling, whence the sound seemed to proceed, he barked; but he barked exactly in concert with the thunder. It thundered once, and he barked once, and so precisely the very instant when the thunder happened, that both sounds seemed to begin and end together. Some dogs will clap their tails close, and sneak into a corner at such a time, but Mungo it seems is of a more fearless family. A house at no great distance from ours was the mark to which the lightning was directed; it knocked down the chimney, split the building, and carried away the corner of the next house, in which lay a fellow drunk, and asleep upon his bed—it roused and terrified him, and he promises to get drunk no more; but I have seen a woeful end of many such

conversions. I remember but one such storm at Olney, since I have known the place, and I am glad that it did not happen two days sooner for the sake of the ladies, who would probably, one of them at least, have been alarmed by it. I have received, since you went, two very flattering letters of thanks, one from Mr. Bacon, and one from Mr. Barham, such as might make a lean poet plump and an humble poet proud.. But, being myself neither lean nor humble, I know of no other effect they had than that they pleased me; and I communicate the intelligence to you not without an assured hope that you will be pleased also. We are now going to walk, and thus far I have written before I have received your letter.

Friday.—I must now be as compact as possible. When I began, I designed four sides, but, my packet being transformed into two single epistles, I can consequently afford you but three. I have filled a large sheet with animadversions upon Pope. I am proceeding in my translation—

"Velis et remis, omnibus nervis,"

as Hudibras has it; and if God give me health and ability, will put it into your hands when I see you next. Mr. —— has just left us. He has read my book, and, as if fearful that I had overlooked some of them myself, has pointed out to me all its beauties. I do assure you the man has a very acute discernment, and a taste that I have no fault to find with. I hope that you are of the same opinion.

Be not sorry that your love of Christ was ex-

cited in you by a picture. Could a dog or a cat suggest to me the thought that Christ is precious, I would not despise that thought, because a dog or a cat suggested it. The meanness of the instrument cannot debase the nobleness of the principle. He that kneels before a picture of Christ is an idolater. But he in whose heart the sight of a picture kindles a warm remembrance of the Saviour's sufferings, must be a Christian. Suppose that I dream, as Gardiner did, that Christ walks before me, that he turns and smiles upon me, and fills my soul with ineffable love and joy. Will a man tell me that I am deceived, that I ought not to love or rejoice in him for such a reason, because a dream is merely a picture drawn upon the imagination? I hold not with such divinity. To love Christ is the greatest dignity of man, be that affection wrought in him how it may.'

Adieu! May the blessing of God be upon you all! It is your mother's heart's wish and mine.

Yours ever,

W. C.

The humble and unostentatious spirit and the fine tone of Christian feeling which pervade the following letter, impart to it a peculiar interest.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, August 6, 1785.

My dear Friend—I found your account of what

* Private Correspondence.

you experienced in your state of maiden authorship very entertaining, because very natural. I suppose that no man ever made his first sally from the press without a conviction that all eyes and ears would be engaged to attend him, at least, without a thousand anxieties lest they should not. But, however arduous and interesting such an enterprise may be in the first instance, it seems to me that our feelings on the occasion soon become obtuse. I can answer at least for one. Mine are by no means what they were when I published my first volume. I am even so indifferent to the matter, that I can truly assert myself guiltless of the very idea of my book sometimes whole days together. God knows that, my mind having been occupied more than twelve years in the contemplation of the most distressing subjects; the world, and its opinion of what I write, is become as unimportant to me as the whistling of a bird in a bush. Despair made amusement necessary, and I found poetry the most agreeable amusement. Had I not endeavoured to perform my best, it would not have amused me at all. The mere blotting of so much paper would have been but indifferent sport. God gave me grace also to wish that I might not write in vain. Accordingly I have mingled much truth with much trifle; and such truths as deserved at least to be clad as well and as handsomely as I could clothe them. If the world approve me not, so much the worse for them, but not for me. I have only endeavoured to serve them, and the loss will be their own. And as to their commendations, if I should chance to win

them, I feel myself equally invulnerable there. The view that I have had of myself, for many years, has been so truly humiliating, that I think the praises of all mankind could not hurt me. God knows that I speak my present sense of the matter at least most truly, when I say that the admiration of creatures like myself seems to me a weapon the least dangerous that my worst enemy could employ against me. I am fortified against it by such solidity of real self-abasement, that I deceive myself most egregiously if I do not heartily despise it. Praise belongeth to God; and I seem to myself to covet it no more than I covet divine honours. Could I assuredly hope that God would at last deliver me, I should have reason to thank him for all that I have suffered, were it only for the sake of this single fruit of my affliction—that it has taught me how much more contemptible I am in myself than I ever before suspected, and has reduced my former share of self-knowledge (of which at that time I had a tolerably good opinion) to a mere nullity, in comparison with what I have acquired since. Self is a subject of inscrutable misery and mischief, and can never be studied to so much advantage as in the dark; for as the bright beams of the sun seem to impart a beauty to the foulest objects, and can make even a dunghill smile, so the light of God's countenance, vouchsafed to a fallen creature, so sweetens him and softens him for the time, that he seems, both to others and to himself, to have nothing savage or sordid about him. *But the heart is a nest of ser-*

pents, and will be such whilst it continues to beat. If God cover the mouth of that nest with his hand, they are hush and snug; but if he withdraw his hand, the whole family lift up their heads and hiss, are as active and venemous as ever. This I always professed to believe from the time that I had embraced the truth, but never knew it as I know it now. To what end I have been made to know it as I do, whether for the benefit of others, or for my own, or for both, or for neither, will appear hereafter.

What I have written leads me naturally to the mention of a matter that I had forgot. I should blame nobody, not even my intimate friends, and those who have the most favourable opinion of me, were they to charge the publication of John Gilpin, at the end of so much solemn and serious truth, to the score of the author's vanity; and to suspect that, however sober I may be upon proper occasions, I have yet that itch of popularity that would not suffer me to sink my title to a jest that had been so successful. But the case is not such. When I sent the copy of "The Task" to Johnson, I desired, indeed, Mr. Unwin to ask him the question whether or not he would choose to make it a part of the volume? This I did merely with a view to promote the sale of it. Johnson answered, "By all means." Some months afterwards he enclosed a note to me in one of my packets, in which he expressed a change of mind, alleging, that to print John Gilpin would only be to print what had been hackneyed in every magazine, in every shop, and at the corner of

every street. I answered that I desired to be entirely governed by his opinion; and that if he chose to wave it, I should be better pleased with the omission. Nothing more passed between us upon the subject, and I concluded that I should never have the immortal honour of being generally known as the author of John Gilpin. In the last packet, however, down came John, very fairly printed, and equipped for public appearance. The business having taken this turn, I concluded that Johnson had adopted my original thought, that it might prove advantageous to the sale; and as he had had the trouble and expense of printing it, I corrected the copy, and let it pass. Perhaps, however, neither the book nor the writer may be made much more famous by John's good company than they would have been without it; for the volume has never yet been advertised, nor can I learn that Johnson intends it. He fears the expense, and the consequence must be prejudicial. Many who would purchase will remain uninformed: but I am perfectly content.

I have considered your motto, and like the purport of it; but the best, because the most laconic manner of it, seems to be this—

Cùm talis sis, sis noster;

utinam being, in my account of it, unnecessary.*

Yours, my dear friend, most truly,

W. C.

* The original passage is as follows:—

Cùm talis sis, utinam noster esses.

If intended, therefore, as a quotation, it should be quoted without alteration.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, August 17, 1785.

My dear Friend—I did very warmly and very sincerely thank Mr. Bacon for his most friendly and obliging letter; but, having written my acknowledgments in the cover, I suppose that they escaped your notice. I should not have contented myself with transmitting them through your hands, but should have addressed them immediately to himself, but that I foresaw plainly this inconvenience: that in writing to him on such an occasion, I must almost unavoidably make self and self's book the subject. Therefore it was, as Mrs. Unwin can vouch for me, that I denied myself that pleasure. I place this matter now in the van of all that I have to say: first, that you may not overlook it; secondly, because it is uppermost in my consideration; and thirdly, because I am impatient to be exculpated from the seeming omission.

You told me, I think, that you seldom read the papers. In our last we had an extract from Johnson's Diary, or whatever else he called it. It is certain that the publisher of it is neither much a friend to the cause of religion, nor to the author's memory; for, by the specimen of it that has reached us, it seems to contain only such stuff as has a direct tendency to expose both to ridicule. His prayers for the dead, and his minute account of the rigour with which he observed church fasts, whether he drank tea or coffee, whether with sugar or without, and

* Private Correspondence.

whether one or two dishes of either, are the most important items to be found in this childish register of the great Johnson, supreme dictator in the chair of literature, and almost a driveller in his closet: a melancholy witness to testify how much of the wisdom of this world may consist with almost infantine ignorance of the affairs of a better. I remember a good man at Huntingdon, who, I doubt not, is now with God, and he also kept a Diary. After his death, through the neglect or foolish wantonness of his executors, it came abroad for the amusement of his neighbours. All the town saw it, and all the town found it highly diverting. It contained much more valuable matter than the poor Doctor's journal seems to do; but it contained also a faithful record of all his deliverances from wind, (for he was much troubled with flatulence,) together with pious acknowledgments of the mercy. There is certainly a call for gratitude, whatsoever benefit we receive; and it is equally certain that we ought to be humbled under the recollection of our least offences; but it would have been as well if neither my old friend had recorded his eructations, nor the Doctor his dishes of sugarless tea, or the dinner at which he ate too much. I wonder, indeed, that any man of such learned eminence as Johnson, who knew that every word he uttered was deemed oracular, and that every scratch of his pen was accounted a treasure, should leave behind him what he would have blushed to exhibit while he lived. If Virgil would have burnt his Æneid, how much more reason had these good men to have burnt their journals!

Mr. Perry will leave none such behind him. He is dying, as I suppose you have heard. Dr. Kerr, who I think has visited him twice or thrice, desired at his last visit to be no more sent for. He pronounced his case hopeless; for that his thigh and leg must mortify. He is however in a most comfortable frame of mind. So long as he thought it possible that he might recover, he was much occupied with a review of his ministry; and, under a deep impression of his deficiencies in that function, assured Mr. R—— that he intended, when he should enter upon it again, to be much more diligent than he had been. He was conscious, he said, that many fine things had been said of him; but that, though he trusted he had found grace so to walk as not to dishonour his office, he was conscious at the same time how little he deserved them. This, with much more to the same purport, passed on Sunday last. On Thursday, Mr. R—— was with him again; and at that time Mr. Perry knew that he must die. The rules and cautions that he had before prescribed to himself, he then addressed directly to his visitor. He exhorted him by all means to be earnest and affectionate in his applications to the unconverted, and not less solicitous to admonish the careless, with a head full of light, and a heart alienated from the ways of God; and those, no less, who being wise in their own conceit, were much occupied with matters above their reach, and very little with subjects of immediate and necessary concern. He added that he had received from God, during his illness, other views of sin than he had ever been favoured

with before; and exhorted him by all means to be watchful. Mr. R—— being himself the reporter of these conversations, it is to be supposed that they impressed him. Admonitions from such lips, and in a dying time too, must have their weight; and it is well with the hearer, when the instruction abides with him. But our own view of these matters is, I believe, that alone which can effectually serve us. The representations of a dying man may strike us at the time; and, if they stir up in us a spirit of self-examination and inquiry, so that we rest not till we have made his views and experience our own, it is well; otherwise, the wind that passes us is hardly sooner gone than the effect of the most serious exhortations.

Farewell, my friend. My views of my spiritual state are, as you say, altered; but they are yet far from being such as they must be, before I can be enduringly comforted.

Yours unfeignedly,

W. C.

The Diary of Dr. Johnson, adverted to in the last letter, created both surprise and disappointment. The great moralist of the age there appears in his real character, distinct from that external splendour with which popular admiration always encircles the brow of genius. The portrait is drawn by his own hand. We cannot withhold our praise from the ingenuousness with which he discloses the secret recesses of his heart, and the fidelity with which conscience exercises its inquisi-

torial power over the life and actions, We are also affected by the deep humility, the confession of sin, and the earnest appeal for mercy, discernible in many of the prayers and meditations. But, viewed as a whole, this Diary creates painful feelings, and affords occasion for much reflection. If therefore we indulge in a few remarks, founded on some of the extracts, it is not to detract from the high fame of so distinguished a scholar, whom we consider to have enlarged the bounds of British literature, and to have acquired a lasting title to public gratitude and esteem, but to perform a solemn and conscientious duty.* We are now arrived at a period when it is high time to establish certain great and momentous truths in the public mind; and, among those that are of primary importance, to prove that Conversion is not a term but a principle; not the designation of a party but the enjoined precept of a Saviour; the evidence of our claim to the title of Christian; and indispensable to constitute our meetness for the enjoyment of heaven.

We now extract the following passages from the Diary of Dr. Johnson, with the intention of adding a few comments.

Easter-day, 1765.—"Since the last Easter, I have

* "If there is a regard due to the memory of the dead, there is yet more respect to be paid to knowledge, to virtue, and to truth."

"It is the business of a biographer to pass lightly over those performances and actions which produce vulgar greatness; to lead the thoughts into domestic privacies, and display the minute details of daily life, where exterior appearances are laid aside."—*Rambler*, No. 60, vol. ii.

reformed no evil habit; my time has been unprofitably spent, and seems as a dream, that has left nothing behind. My memory grows confused, and I know not how the days pass over me."

"I purpose to rise at eight, because, though I shall not yet rise early, it will be much earlier than I now rise, for I often lie till two; and will gain me much time, and tend to a conquest over idleness, and give time for other duties."

Sept. 18, 1768.—"I have now begun the sixtieth year of my life. How the last year has past, I am unwilling to terrify myself with thinking."

Jan. 1, 1769.—"I am now about to begin another year: how the last has past it would be, in my state of weakness, perhaps not prudent too solicitously to recollect."

1772.—"I resolved last Easter to read, within the year, the whole Bible, a very great part of which I had never looked upon. I read the Greek Testament without construing, and this day concluded the Apocalypse. I think that no part was missed."

"My purpose of reading the rest of the Bible was forgotten, till I took by chance the resolutions of last Easter in my hand."

"I hope to read the whole Bible once a year, as long as I live."

April 26.—"It is a comfort to me, that at last, in my sixty-third year, I have attained to know, even thus hastily, confusedly, and imperfectly, what my Bible contains."

1775.—"Yesterday, I do not recollect that to go to church came into my thoughts; but I sat in my

chamber preparing for preparation; interrupted I know not how. I was near two hours at dinner."

1777.—"I have this year omitted church on most Sundays, intending to supply the deficiency in the week. So that *I owe twelve attendances on worship.*"

"When I look back upon resolutions of improvement and amendment, which have, year after year, been made and broken, either by negligence, forgetfulness, vicious idleness, casual interruption, or morbid infirmity; when I find that so much of my life has stolen unprofitably away, and that I can descry, by retrospection, scarcely a few single days properly and vigorously employed, why do I yet try to resolve again? I try, because reformation is necessary, and despair criminal; I try in humble hope of the help of God."*

Our sole object, in the introduction of these extracts, is to found upon them an appeal to those who question the necessity of Conversion, in that higher sense and acceptation which implies an inward principle of grace, changing and transforming the heart. We would beg to ask whether it was not the want of the vital power and energy of this principle, that produced in Johnson the vacillation of mind and purpose, which we have just recorded; the hours lost; the resolutions broken; the sabbaths violated; and the sacred volume not read, till the shades of evening advanced upon him? What instance can be adduced that more clearly demonstrates the insufficiency of the highest acquirements of human learning, and that nothing but a

* See Diary of Dr. Johnson.

Divine power can illuminate the mind, and convert the heart? Happily, Johnson is known to have at length found what he needed, and to have died with a hope full of immortality.*

But we would go further. We maintain that all men, without respect of character or person, need conversion; for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" all partake of the corruption and infirmities of a fallen nature, and inherit the primeval curse. Shall reason, shall philosophy effect the cure? Reason sees what is right; erring nature, in despite of reason, follows what is wrong. Philosophy can penetrate into the abstrusest mysteries, ascertain by what laws the universe is governed, and trace the heavenly bodies in their courses, but cannot eradicate one evil passion from the soul. Where then lies the remedy? The Gospel reveals it. And what is the Gospel? The Gospel is a dispensation of grace and mercy, for the recovery of fallen man, *and the application of this remedy to the heart and conscience effects that Conversion of which we are speaking.* But by whom or by what applied? By Him who holds "the keys of heaven and of hell," who "openeth, and no man shutteth," and whose prerogative it is to say, "Behold, I make all things new."† And how? By his word, and by his Spirit. "He sent *his word* and healed them."‡ "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by *the word of God*, which liveth and abideth for ever."§ The word is the appointed instrument, the

* See vol. ii. p. 269—271. † Rev. xxi. 5.

‡ Psal. cvii. 20. § 1 Pet. i. 23. See also Heb. iv. 12.

Spirit, the mighty agent which gives the quickening power: * not by any supernatural revelation, but in the ordinary operations of divine grace, and consistently with the freedom and co-operation of man as a moral agent; speaking pardon and peace to the conscience, and delivering from the tyranny of sense and the slavery of fear, by proclaiming "liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

The last subject for reflection suggested by the Diary of Dr. Johnson, is the frequent neglect of the Sabbath, and his confession that *he had lived a stranger to the greater part of the contents of his Bible till the sixty-third year of his age.* This is an afflicting record, and we notice the fact, from a deep conviction that piety can never retain its power and ascendancy in the heart, where the Bible is not read, and the ordinances of God are habitually neglected. When will genius learn that its noblest attribute is to light its fires at the lamp of divine truth, and that the union of piety and learning is the highest perfection of our nature? We beg to commend to the earnest attention of the student the following eloquent testimony to the sacred volume from the pen of Sir William Jones.

"I have carefully and regularly perused these Holy Scriptures, and am of opinion that the Volume, independently of its divine origin, contains more subli-

* "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." John vi. 63. The union of the Word and the Spirit in imparting spiritual life to the soul is forcibly expressed in the same verse: "The words *that I speak* unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

mity, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains of eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever language they may have been written." *

Having quoted Sir William Jones's testimony, we conclude by urging his example.

> " Before thy mystic altar, heavenly Truth,
> I kneel in manhood, as I knelt in youth:
> Thus let me kneel, till this dull form decay,
> And life's last shade be brighten'd by thy ray.
> Then shall my soul, now lost in clouds below,
> Soar without bound, without consuming glow." †

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, August 27, 1785.

My dear Friend—I was low in spirits yesterday when your parcel came and raised them. Every proof of attention and regard to a man who lives in a vinegar-bottle is welcome from his friends on the outside of it; accordingly your books were welcome, (you must not forget, by the way, that I want the original, of which you have sent me the translation only,) and the ruffles from Miss Shuttleworth most welcome. I am covetous, if ever man was, of living in the remembrance of absentees, whom I highly value and esteem, and consequently felt myself much gratified by her very obliging present. I have had more comfort, far more comfort, in the connexions that I have formed within the last twenty

* See Lord Teignmouth's Life of Sir William Jones.
† Ibid.

years, than in the more numerous ones that I had before.

Memorandum.—The latter are almost all Unwins or Unwinisms.

You are entitled to my thanks also for the facetious engravings of John Gilpin. A serious poem is like a swan: it flies heavily and never far; but a jest has the wings of a swallow that never tire, and that carry it into every nook and corner. I am perfectly a stranger however to the reception that, my volume meets with, and, I believe, in respect of my *nonchalance* upon that subject, if authors would but copy so fair an example, am a most exemplary character. I must tell you nevertheless that, although the laurels that I gain at Olney will never minister much to my pride, I have acquired some. The Rev. Mr. Scott is my admirer, and thinks my second volume superior to my first. It ought to be so. If we do not improve by practice, then nothing can mend us; and a man has no more cause to be mortified at being told that he has excelled himself, than the elephant had, whose praise it was that he was the greatest elephant in the world, himself excepted.

If it be fair to judge of a book by an extract, I do not wonder that you were so little edified by Johnson's Journal. It is even more ridiculous than was poor ——'s, of flatulent memory. The portion of it given to us in this day's paper contains not one sentiment worth one farthing except the last, in which he resolves to bind himself with no more unbidden obligations. Poor man! one would think that to pray for his dead wife, and to pinch himself with

church-fasts had been almost the whole of his religion. I am sorry that he who was so manly an advocate for the cause of virtue in all other places was so childishly employed, and so superstitiously too, in his closet. Had he studied his Bible more, to which by his own confession he was in great part a stranger, he had known better what use to make of his retired hours, and had trifled less. His lucubrations of this sort have rather the appearance of religious dotage than of any vigorous exertions towards God. It will be well if the publication prove not hurtful in its effects, by exposing the best cause, already too much despised, to ridicule still more profane. On the other side of the same paper, I find a long string of aphorisms, and maxims, and rules for the conduct of life, which, though they appear not with his name, are so much in his manner, with the above-mentioned, that I suspect them for his. I have not read them all, but several of them I read that were trivial enough: for the sake of one however I forgive him the rest—he advises never to banish hope entirely, because it is the cordial of life, although it be the greatest flatterer in the world. Such a measure of hope as may not endanger my peace by a disappointment I would wish to cherish upon every subject in which I am interested: but there lies the difficulty. A cure however, and the only one, for all the irregularities of hope and fear, is found in submission to the will of God. Happy they that have it!

This last sentence puts me in mind of your reference to Blair in a former letter, whom you there permitted to be your arbiter to adjust the respective

claims of *who* or *that*. I do not rashly differ from so great a grammarian, nor do at any rate differ from him altogether—upon solemn occasions, as in prayer or preaching, for instance, I would be strictly correct, and upon stately ones; for instance, were I writing an epic poem, I would be so likewise, but not upon familiar occasions. God, *who* heareth prayer, is right: Hector, *who* saw Patroclus, is right: and the man, *that* dresses me every day, is in my mind right also; because the contrary would give an air of stiffness and pedantry to an expression that, in respect of the matter of it, cannot be too negligently made up.

Adieu, my dear William! I have scribbled with all my might, which, breakfast-time excepted, has been my employment ever since I rose, and it is now past one.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Sept. 24, 1785.

My dear Friend—I am sorry than an excursion, which you would otherwise have found so agreeable, was attended with so great a drawback upon its pleasures as Miss Cunningham's illness must needs have been. Had she been able to bathe in the sea, it might have been of service to her, but I knew her weakness and delicacy of habit to be such as did not

* Private Correspondence.

encourage any very sanguine hopes that the regimen would suit her. I remember Southampton well, having spent much time there; but, though I was young, and had no objections on the score of conscience either to dancing or cards, I never was in the assembly-room in my life. I never was fond of company, and especially disliked it in the country. A walk to Netley Abbey, or to Freemantle, or to Redbridge, or a book by the fire-side, had always more charms for me than any other amusement that the place afforded. I was also a sailor, and, being of Sir Thomas Hesketh's party, who was himself born one, was often pressed into the service. But, though I gave myself an air and wore trowsers, I had no genuine right to that honour, disliking much to be occupied in great waters, unless in the finest weather. How they continue to elude the wearisomeness that attends a sea life, who take long voyages, you know better than I; but, for my own part, I seldom have sailed so far as from Hampton river to Portsmouth without feeling the confinement irksome, and sometimes to a degree that was almost insupportable. There is a certain perverseness, of which I believe all men have a share, but of which no man has a larger share than I—I mean that temper, or humour, or whatever it is to be called, that indisposes us to a situation, though not unpleasant in itself, merely because we cannot get out of it. I could not endure the room in which I now write, were I conscious that the door were locked. In less than five minutes I should feel myself a prisoner, though I can spend hours in it under an assurance

that I may leave it when I please without experiencing any tedium at all. It was for this reason, I suppose, that the yacht was always disagreeable to me. Could I have stepped out of it into a cornfield or a garden, I should have liked it well enough, but, being surrounded with water, I was as much confined in it as if I had been surrounded by fire, and did not find that it made me any adequate compensation for such an abridgement of my liberty. I make little doubt but Noah was glad when he was enlarged from the ark; and we are sure that Jonah was, when he came out of the fish; and so was I to escape from the good sloop the Harriet.

In my last, I wrote you word that Mr. Perry was given over by his friends, and pronounced a dead man by his physician. Just when I had reached the end of the foregoing paragraph, he came in. His errand hither was to bring two letters, which I enclose; one is to yourself, in which he will give you, I doubt not, such an account both of his body and mind, as will make all that I might say upon those subjects superfluous. The only consequences of his illness seem to be that he looks a little pale, and that, though always a most excellent man, he is still more angelic than he was. Illness sanctified is better than health. But I know a man who has been a sufferer by a worse illness than his, almost these fourteen years, and who at present is only the worse for it.

Mr. Scott called upon us yesterday; he is much inclined to set up a Sunday school, if he can raise a *fund for the* purpose. Mr. Jones has had one some

time at Clifton, and Mr. Unwin writes me word that he has been thinking of nothing else, day and night, for a fortnight. It is a wholesome measure that seems to bid fair to be pretty generally adopted, and, for the good effects that it promises, deserves well to be so. I know not, indeed, while the spread of the gospel continues so limited as it is, how a reformation of manners in the lower class of mankind can be brought to pass; or by what other means the utter abolition of all principle among them, moral as well as religious, can possibly be prevented. Heathenish parents can only bring up heathenish children; an assertion nowhere oftener or more clearly illustrated than at Olney; where children, seven years of age, infest the streets every evening with curses and with songs, to which it would be unseemly to give their proper epithet. Such urchins as these could not be so diabolically accomplished, unless by the connivance of their parents. It is well indeed if, in some instances, their parents be not themselves their instructors. Judging by their proficiency, one can hardly suppose any other. It is therefore doubtless an act of the greatest charity to snatch them out of such hands, before the inveteracy of the evil shall have made it desperate. Mr. Teedon, I should imagine, will be employed as a teacher, should this expedient be carried into effect. I know not at least that we have any other person among us so well qualified for the service. He is indisputably a Christian man, and miserably poor, whose revenues need im-

provement, as much as any children in the world can possibly need instruction.

Believe me, my dear friend,
With true affection, yours,
W. C.

The first establishment of Sunday schools in England, which commenced about this time, is too important an era to be passed over in silence. The founder of this system, so beneficial in its consequences to the rising generation, was Robert Raikes, Esq., of Gloucester, and from whose lips the writer once received the history of their first institution. He had observed, in going to divine worship on the Sabbath, that the streets were generally filled with groups of idle and ragged children, playing and blaspheming in a manner that showed their utter unconsciousness of the sacred obligations of that day. The thought suggested itself, that, if these children could be collected together, and the time so misapplied be devoted to instruction and attendance at the house of God, a happy change might be effected in their life and conduct. He consulted the clergyman of the parish, who encouraged the attempt. A respectable and pious female was immediately selected, and twelve children, who were shortly afterwards decently clothed, were placed under her care. Rules and regulations were formed, and the school opened and closed with prayer. The ignorant were taught to read, the word of God was introduced, and the children walked in orderly procession to church.

The visible improvement in their moral habits, and their proficiency in learning, led to an extension of the plan. The principal inhabitants of the town became interested in its success, and in a short time the former noisy inmates of the streets were found uniting in the accents of prayer and praise in the temple of Jehovah. The example manifested by the city of Gloucester soon attracted public attention. The queen of George the Third requested to be furnished with the history and particulars of the undertaking, and was so impressed with its importance as to distinguish it by her sanction. The result is well known. Sunday schools are now universally established, and have been adopted in Europe, in America, and wherever the traces of civilisation are to be discerned. Their sound has gone forth into all lands, and, so long as knowledge is necessary to piety, and both constitute the grace and ornament of the young and the safeguard of society, the venerable name of Raikes will be enrolled with gratitude among the friends and benefactors of mankind.*

* The editor, once conversing with the late Rev. Andrew Fuller, the well-known secretary of the Serampore Missionary Society, on the subject of Sunday schools in connexion with that noble institution, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the latter observed, "Yes: if the Bible Society had commenced its operations earlier, its usefulness would have been comparatively limited, because the faculty of reading would not have been so generally acquired. Each institution is in the order of Providence:—God first raised up Sunday schools, and children were thereby taught to read; afterwards, when this faculty was obtained, in order that it might not be per-

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

Olney, Oct. 11, 1785.

My dear Sir—You began your letter with an apology for long silence, and it is now incumbent upon me to do the same; and the rather, as your kind invitation to Wargrave entitled you to a speedier answer. The truth is that I am become, if not a man of business, yet a busy man, and have been engaged almost this twelvemonth in a work that will allow of no long interruption. On this account it was impossible for me to accept your obliging summons; and, having only to tell you that I could not, it appeared to me as a matter of no great moment whether you received that intelligence soon or late.

You do me justice when you ascribe my printed epistle to you to my friendship for you; though, in fact, it was equally owing to the opinion that I have of yours for me.† Having, in one part or other of

verted to wrong ends, God raised up the Bible Society, that the best of all possible books might be put into their hands. Yes, Sir," he added in his emphatic manner, "the hand of God is visible in both; they fit each other like hand and glove."

* Private Correspondence.

† The epistle in which he commemorates his friendship for Mr. Hill begins as follows:—

"Dear Joseph—Five-and-twenty years ago—
Alas, how time escapes! 'tis even so—" &c. &c.

We add the two concluding lines, as descriptive of his person and character.

"An honest man, close button'd to the chin,
Broad cloth without, and a warm heart within."

See *Poems.*

ny two volumes, distinguished by name the majority
f those few for whom I entertain a friendship, it
eemed to me that it would be unjustifiable negli-
gence to omit yourself; and, if I took that step with-
ut communicating to you my intention, it was only
o gratify myself the more with the hope of sur-
rising you agreeably. Poets are dangerous persons
o be acquainted with, especially if a man have that
n his character that promises to shine in verse. To
hat very circumstance it is owing that you are now
guring away in mine. For, notwithstanding what
ou say on the subject of honesty and friendship,
at they are not splendid enough for public cele-
ration, I must still think of them as I did before,—
at there are no qualities of the mind and heart that
n deserve it better. I can, at least for my own
rt, look round about upon the generality, and,
hile I see them deficient in those grand requisites
a respectable character, am not able to discover
at they possess any other of value enough to atone
r the want of them.

I beg that you will present my respects to Mrs.
ill, and believe me

Ever affectionately yours,

W. C.

The period at which we are now arrived, was
arked by the renewal of an intimacy, long sus-
nded indeed, but which neither time nor circum-
ances could efface from the affectionate heart of
owper. The person to whom we allude is Lady
esketh, a near relative of the poet, and whose name

has already appeared in the early part of his history.

Their intercourse had been frequent, and endeared by reciprocal esteem in their youthful years; but the vicissitudes of life had separated them far from each other. During Cowper's long retirement, his accomplished cousin had passed some years with her husband abroad, and others, after her return, in a variety of mournful duties. She was at this time a widow, and her indelible regard for her poetical relation being agreeably stimulated by the publication of his recent works, she wrote to him, on that occasion, a very affectionate letter.

It gave rise to many from him, which we shall now introduce to the notice of the reader, because they give a minute account of their amiable author, at a very interesting period of his life; and because they reflect lustre on his character and genius in various points of view, and cannot fail to inspire the conviction that his letters are rivals to his poems, in the rare excellence of representing life and nature with graceful and endearing fidelity.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, Oct. 12, 1785.

My dear Cousin—It is no new thing with you to give pleasure. But I will venture to say that you do not often give more than you gave me this morning. When I came down to breakfast, and found upon the

table a letter franked by my uncle,* and when opening that frank I found that it contained a letter from you, I said within myself—"This is just as it should be. We are all grown young again, and the days that I thought I should see no more are actually returned." You perceive, therefore, that you judged well, when you conjectured that a line from you would not be disagreeable to me. It could not be otherwise than as in fact it proved—a most agreeable surprise, for I can truly boast of an affection for you, that neither years nor interrupted intercourse have at all abated. I need only recollect how much I valued you once, and with how much cause, immediately to feel a revival of the same value; if that can be said to revive, which at the most has only been dormant for want of employment. But I slander it when I say that it has slept. A thousand times have I recollected a thousand scenes, in which our two selves have formed the whole of the drama, with the greatest pleasure; at times too when I had no reason to suppose that I should ever hear from you again. I have laughed with you at the Arabian Nights' Entertainment, which afforded us, as you well know, a fund of merriment that deserves never to be forgot. I have walked with you to Netley Abbey, and have scrambled with you over hedges in every direction, and many other feats we have performed together upon the field of my remembrance, and all within these few years. Should I say within this twelvemonth, I should not transgress the truth. The hours that I have spent with

* Ashley Cowper, Esq.

you were among the pleasantest of my former days, and are therefore chronicled in my mind so deeply as to fear no erasure. Neither do I forget my poor friend, Sir Thomas; I should remember him indeed at any rate, on account of his personal kindness to myself, but the last testimony that he gave of his regard for you endears him to me still more. With his uncommon understanding (for with many peculiarities he had more sense than any of his acquaintance,) and with his generous sensibilities, it was hardly possible that he should not distinguish you as he has done. As it was the last, so it was the best proof that he could give of a judgment that never deceived him, when he would allow himself leisure to consult it.

You say that you have often heard of me; that puzzles me. I cannot imagine from what quarter, but it is no matter. I must tell you, however, my cousin, that your information has been a little defective. That I am happy in my situation is true; I live, and have lived these twenty years, with Mrs. Unwin, to whose affectionate care of me, during the far greater part of that time, it is, under Providence, owing that I live at all. But I do not account myself happy in having been, for thirteen of those years, in a state of mind that has made all that care and attention necessary; an attention and a care that have injured her health, and which, had she not been uncommonly supported, must have brought her to the grave. But I will pass to another subject; it would be cruel to particularize only to give pain, neither would I by any means give a sable hue to

the first letter of a correspondence so unexpectedly renewed.

I am delighted with what you tell me of my uncle's good health. To enjoy any measure of cheerfulness at so late a day is much. But to have that late day enlivened with the vivacity of youth is much more, and in these postdiluvian times a rarity indeed. Happy for the most part are parents who have daughters. Daughters are not apt to outlive their natural affections, which a son has generally survived, even before his boyish years are expired. I rejoice particularly in my uncle's felicity, who has three female descendants from his little person, who leave him nothing to wish for upon that head.

My dear Cousin, dejection of spirits which (I suppose) may have prevented many a man from becoming an author, made me one. I find constant employment necessary, and therefore take care to be constantly employed. Manual occupations do not engage the mind sufficiently, as I know by experience, having tried many. But composition, especially of verse, absorbs it wholly. I write therefore generally three hours in a morning, and in an evening I transcribe. I read also, but less than I write, for I must have bodily exercise, and therefore never pass a day without it.

You ask me where I have been this summer. I answer, at Olney. Should you ask me where I spent the last seventeen summers, I should still answer, at Olney. Ay and the winters also I have seldom left it, except when I attended my brother in his last illness, never I believe a fortnight together.

Adieu, my beloved Cousin, I shall not always be thus nimble in reply, but shall always have great pleasure in answering you when I can.

Yours, my dear friend and Cousin,

W. C.

The letters addressed to Mr. Newton by Cowper are frequently characterised by a plaintiveness of feeling that powerfully awakens the emotions of the heart. The following contains some incidental allusions of this kind.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Oct. 16, 1785.

My dear Friend—To have sent a child to heaven is a great honour and a great blessing, and your feelings on such an occasion may well be such as render you rather an object of congratulation than of condolence. And were it otherwise, yet, having yourself free access to all the sources of genuine consolation, I feel that it would be little better than impertinence in me to suggest any. An escape from a life of suffering to a life of happiness and glory is such a deliverance as leaves no room for the sorrow of survivors, unless they sorrow for themselves. We cannot, indeed, lose what we love without regretting it; but a Christian is in possession of such alleviations of that regret as the world knows nothing of. Their beloveds, when they die, go they know not whither; and if they suppose them, as they

* Private Correspondence.

rally do, in a state of happiness, they have yet
in indifferent prospect of joining them in that
hereafter. But it is not so with you. You
know whither your beloved is gone, and you
that you shall follow her; and you know also
n the mean time she is incomparably happier than
self. So far, therefore, as she is concerned,
ng has come to pass but what was most fer-
y to be wished. I do not know that I am
larly selfish; but one of the first thoughts that
account of Miss Cunningham's dying moments
eparture suggested to me had self for its object.
uck me that she was not born when I sank into
ess, and that she is gone to heaven before I have
ged again. What a lot, said I to myself, is mine!
s helmet is fallen from my head, and whose sword
my hand, in the midst of the battle; who was
en down to the earth when I least expected it;
ad just begun to cry victory! when I was de-
l myself; and who have been trampled upon so
that others have had time to conquer and to re-
their crown, before I have been able to make
successful effort to escape from under the feet of
nemies. It seemed to me, therefore, that if
nourned for Miss Cunningham you gave those
to her to which I only had a right, and I was
t ready to exclaim, "I am the dead, and not
you misplace your sorrows." I have sent you
istory of my mind on this subject without any
se; if it does not please you, pardon it at least,
is the truth. The unhappy, I believe, are
s selfish. I have, I confess, my comfortable

moments; but they are like the morning dew, so suddenly do they pass away and are gone.

It should seem a matter of small moment to me, who never hear him, whether Mr. Scott shall be removed from Olney to the Lock, or no; yet, in fact, I believe that few interest themselves more in that event than I. He knows my manner of life, and has ceased long since to wonder at it. A new minister would need information, and I am not ambitious of having my tale told to a stranger. He would also perhaps think it necessary to assail me with arguments, which would be more profitably disposed of, if he should discharge them against the walls of a tower. I wish, therefore, for the continuance of Mr. Scott. He honoured me so far as to consult me twice upon the subject. At our first interview, he seemed to discern but little in the proposal that entitled it to his approbation. But, when he came the second time, we observed that his views of it were considerably altered. He was warm—he was animated; difficulties had disappeared, and allurements had started up in their place. I could not say to him, Sir, you are naturally of a sanguine temper; and he that is so cannot too much distrust his own judgment;—but I am glad that he will have the benefit of yours. It seems to me, however, that the minister who shall re-illumine the faded glories of the Lock must not only practise great fidelity in his preaching, to which task Mr. Scott is perfectly equal, but must do it with much address; and it is hardly worth while to observe that his excellence does not lie that way,

because he is ever ready to acknowledge it himself. But I have nothing to suggest upon this subject that will be new to you, and therefore drop it; the rather, indeed, because I may reasonably suppose that by this time the point is decided.

I have reached that part of my paper which I generally fill with intelligence, if I can find any: but there is a great dearth of it at present; and Mr. Scott has probably anticipated me in all the little that there is. Lord P—— having dismissed Mr. Jones from his service, the people of Turvey * have burnt him [Mr. Jones] in effigy, with a bundle of quick-thorn† under his arm. What consequences are to follow his dismission is uncertain. His lordship threatens him with a lawsuit; and, unless their disputes can be settled by arbitration, it is not unlikely that the profits of poor Jones's stewardship will be melted down at Westminster. He has laboured hard, and no doubt with great integrity, and has been rewarded with hard words and scandalous treatment.

Mr. Scott (which perhaps he may not have told

* The Peterborough family had formerly a mansion and large estate in the parish of Turvey. It is mentioned in Camden's Britannia, so far back as in the time of Henry VIII. There are some marble monuments in the parish church, executed with great magnificence, and in high preservation, recording the heroes of former times belonging to that ancient but now extinct race.

† The dispute originated respecting the enclosure of the parish; and, as this act was unpopular with the poor, the bundle of quick-thorn was intended to be expressive of their indignant feelings.

you, for he did not mention it here) has met with similar treatment at a place in this country called Hinksey, or by some such name.* But he suffered in effigy for the Gospel's sake;—a cause in which I presume he would not be unwilling, if need were, to be burnt *in propriâ personâ*.

I have nothing to add, but that we are well, and remember you with much affection; and that I am, my dear friend,

Sincerely yours,

W. C.

The following letters communicate various interesting particulars respecting Cowper's laborious undertaking, the new version of Homer's Iliad.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Oct. 22, 1785.

My dear William—You might well suppose that your letter had miscarried, though in fact it was duly received. I am not often so long in arrear, and you may assure yourself that when at any time it happens that I am so, neither neglect nor idleness is the cause. I have, as you well know, a daily occupation, forty lines to translate, a task which I never excuse myself, when it is possible to perform it. Equally sedulous I am in the matter of transcribing, so that between both my morning and evening are most part completely engaged. Add to this that, though my spirits are seldom so bad but I can

* The proper name of the place is Tingewick.

write verse, they are often at so low an ebb as to make the production of a letter impossible. So much for a trespass, which called for some apology, but for which to apologize further would be a greater trespass still.

I am now in the twentieth book of Homer, and shall assuredly proceed, because the further I go the more I find myself justified in the undertaking; and in due time, if I live, shall assuredly publish. In the whole I shall have composed about forty thousand verses, about which forty thousand verses I shall have taken great pains, on no occasion suffering a slovenly line to escape me. I leave you to guess therefore whether, such a labour once achieved, I shall not determine to turn it to some account, and to gain myself profit if I can, if not at least some credit for my reward.

I perfectly approve of your course with John. The most entertaining books are best to begin with, and none in the world, so far as entertainment is concerned, deserves the preference to Homer. Neither do I know that there is any where to be found Greek of easier construction — poetical Greek I mean; and as for prose, I should recommend Xenophon's Cyropædia. That also is a most amusing narrative, and ten times easier to understand than the crabbed epigrams and scribblements of the minor poets that are generally put into the hands of boys. I took particular notice of the neatness of John's Greek character, which (let me tell you) deserves its share of commendation; for to write

the language legibly is not the lot of every man who can read it. Witness myself for one.

I like the little ode of Huntingford's that you sent me. In such matters we do not expect much novelty, or much depth of thought. The expression is all in all, which to me at least appears to be faultless.

Adieu, my dear William! We are well, and you and yours are ever the objects of our affection.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Nov. 5, 1785.

My dear Friend—Were it with me as in day past, you should have no cause to complain of m tardiness in writing. You supposed that I woul have accepted your packet as an answer to my las and so indeed I did, and felt myself overpaid; bu though a debtor, and deeply indebted too, had n wherewithal to discharge the arrear. You do n know nor suspect what a conquest I sometimes gai when I only take up the pen with a design to writ Many a time have I resolved to say to all my fe correspondents,—I take my leave of you for t present; if I live to see better days, you shall hea from me again.—I have been driven to the ver verge of this measure; and even upon this occasio was upon the point of desiring Mrs. Unwin to b come my substitute. She indeed offered to writ

* Private Correspondence.

in my stead; but, fearing that you would understand me to be even worse than I am, I rather chose to answer for myself.—So much for a subject with which I could easily fill the sheet, but with which I have occupied too great a part of it already. It is time that I should thank you, and return you Mrs. Unwin's thanks for your Narrative.* I told you in my last in what manner I felt myself affected by the abridgement of it contained iny our letter; and have therefore only to add, upon that point, that the impression made upon me by the relation at large was of a like kind. I envy all that live in the enjoyment of a good hope, and much more all who die to enjoy the fruit of it: but I recollect myself in time; I resolved not to touch that chord again, and yet was just going to trespass upon my resolution. As to the rest, your history of your happy niece is just what it should be,—clear, affectionate, and plain; worthy of her, and worthy of yourself. How much more beneficial to the world might such a memorial of an unknown but pious and believing child eventually prove, would the supercilious learned condescend to read it, than the history of all the kings and heroes that ever lived! But the world has its objects of admiration, and God has objects of his love. Those make a noise and perish; and these weep silently for a short season, and live for ever. I had rather have been your niece, or the writer of her story, than any Cæsar that ever thundered.

* The Narrative of some remarkable and interesting particulars in the life of Mr. Newton.

The vanity of human attainments was never so conspicuously exemplified as in the present day. The sagacious moderns make discoveries, which, how useful they may prove to themselves I know not; certainly they do no honour to the ancients. Homer and Virgil have enjoyed (if the dead have any such enjoyments) an unrivalled reputation as poets, through a long succession of ages: but it is now shrewdly suspected that Homer did not compose the poems for which he has been so long applauded;* and it is even asserted by a certain Robert Heron, Esq., that Virgil never wrote a line worth reading. He is a pitiful plagiary; he is a servile imitator, a bungler in his plan, and has not a thought in his whole work that will bear examination. In short, he is any thing but what the literati for two thousand years have taken him to be—a man of genius and a fine writer. I fear that Homer's case is desperate. After the lapse of so many generations, it would be a difficult matter to elucidate a question which time and modern ingenuity together combine to puzzle. And I suppose that it were in vain for an honest plain man to inquire, if Homer did not write the Iliad and the

* A few years afterwards a question was agitated whether the war of Troy itself was not a poetical fiction. Dr. Clarke, in his Travels, shows the absurdity of these incredulous speculations, and satisfactorily establishes the fact. In the same spirit Lord Orford endeavoured to prove that Falstaff was no coward. But the boldest act of literary presumption was the assertion of Father Hardouin, that all the classic writings of antiquity were the production of the monks of the middle ages.

Odyssey, who did? The answer would undoubtedly be—it is no matter; he did not: which is all that I undertook to prove. For Virgil, however, there still remains some consolation. The very same Mr. Heron, who finds no beauties in the Æneid, discovers not a single instance of the sublime in Scripture. Particularly he says, speaking of the prophets, that Ezekiel, although the filthiest of all writers, is the best of them. He, therefore, being the first of the learned who has reprobated even the style of the Scriptures, may possibly make the fewer proselytes to his judgment of the Heathen writer. For my own part at least, had I been accustomed to doubt whether the Æneid were a noble composition or not, this gentleman would at once have decided the question for me; and I should have been immediately assured that a work must necessarily abound in beauties that had the happiness to displease a censurer of the Word of God. What enterprises will not an inordinate passion for fame suggest? It prompted one man to fire the Temple of Ephesus; another, to fling himself into a volcano; and now has induced this wicked and unfortunate Squire either to deny his own feelings, or to publish to all the world that he has no feelings at all.*

* The playful spirit in which the writer adverts to this subject appears to have yielded afterwards to a feeling of indignation; the following lines in his own hand-writing having been found by Dr. Johnson amongst his papers:—

ON THE AUTHOR OF LETTERS ON LITERATURE.

The Genius of th' Augustan age
His head among Rome's ruins rear'd,

Mr. Scott is pestered with anonymous letters, but he conducts himself wisely; and the question whether he shall go to the Lock or not, seems hasting to a decision in the affirmative.

We are tolerably well; and Mrs. Unwin adds to mine her affectionate remembrances of yourself and Mrs. Newton.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

The work of Mr. Heron is entitled, "Letters on Literature," in which he spares neither things sacred nor profane. The author seems to be a man of talent, but it is talent painfully misapplied. After calling Virgil a servile imitator of Homer, and indulging in various critiques, he thus concludes his animadversions. "Such is the Æneid, which the author, with good reason, on his death-bed, condemned to the flames; and, had it suffered that fate, real poetry would have lost nothing by it. I have said that, notwithstanding all, Virgil deserves

And, bursting with heroic rage,
When literary Heron appear'd,

Thou hast, he cried, like him of old
Who set th' Ephesian dome on fire,
By being scandalously bold,
Attain'd the mark of thy desire.

And for traducing Virgil's name
Shalt share his merited reward;
A perpetuity of fame,
That rots, and stinks, and is abhorr'd.

his fame; for his fame is now confined to schools and academies; and his style (the pickle that has preserved his mummy from corruption) is pure and exquisite."

Wit, employed at the expense of taste and sound judgment, can neither advance the reputation of its author, nor promote the cause of true literature. This supercilious treatment of the noble productions of classic genius too much resembles that period in the literary history of France, when the question was agitated (with Perrault at its head) as to the relative superiority of the ancients or moderns. It was at that time fashionable with one of the contending parties to decry the pretensions of the ancients. One of their writers exclaims,

> " Dépouillons ces respects serviles
> Que nous portons aux temps passés.
> Les Homères et les Virgiles
> Peuvent *encore être effacés.*"—La Motte.

We trust that this corrupt spirit will never infect the Lycèums of British literature; but that they will be reserved ever to be the sanctuaries of high-taught genius, chastened by a refined and discriminating taste, and embellished with the graces of a simple and noble eloquence, formed on the pure models of classic antiquity.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

Olney, Nov. 7, 1785.

My dear Friend—Your time being so much occupied as to leave you no opportunity for a word more than the needful, I am the more obliged to you that you have found leisure even for that, and thank you for the note above acknowledged.

I know not at present what subject I could enter upon, by which I should not put you to an expense of moments that you can ill spare: I have often been displeased when a neighbour of mine, being himself an idle man, has delivered himself from the burthen of a vacant hour or two, by coming to repose his idleness upon me. Not to incur therefore and deservedly the blame that I have charged upon him, by interrupting you, who are certainly a busy man, whatever may be the case with myself, I shall only add that I am, with my respects to Mrs. Hill,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

The tried stability of Cowper's friendship, after a long interval of separation, and the delicacy with which he accepts Lady Hesketh's offer of pecuniary aid, are here depicted in a manner that reflects honour on both parties.

* Private Correspondence.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, Nov. 9, 1785.

dearest Cousin—Whose last most affectionate
ıas run in my head ever since I received it, and
[now sit down to answer, two days sooner than
ıt will serve me. I thank you for it, and with a
h for which I am sure you will give me credit,
ı I do not spend many words in describing it.
ɔt seek *new* friends, not being altogether sure
should find them, but have unspeakable plea-
ı being still beloved by an old one. I hope
ow our correspondence has suffered its last
ıption, and that we shall go down together to
ave, chatting and chirping as merrily as such
e of things as this will permit.

n happy that my poems have pleased you.
lume has afforded me no such pleasure at any
ɛither while I was writing it or since its pub-
n, as I have derived from yours and my uncle's
n of it. I make certain allowances for parti-
ınd for that peculiar quickness of taste with
you both relish what you like, and, after all
ıcks upon those accounts duly made, find my-
ch in the measure of your approbation that
mains. But, above all, I honour John Gilpin,
t was he who first encouraged you to write.
ɛ him on purpose to laugh at, and he served
ırpose well; but I am now indebted to him
more valuable acquisition than all the
er in the world amounts to, the recovery
intercourse with you, which is to me ines-

timable. My benevolent and generous Cousin, when I was once asked if I wanted any thing, and given delicately to understand that the inquirer was ready to supply all my occasions, I thankfully and civilly, but positively declined the favour. I neither suffer, nor have suffered, any such inconveniences as I had not much rather endure than come under obligations of that sort to a person comparatively with yourself a stranger to me. But to you I answer otherwise. I know you thoroughly, and the liberality of your disposition, and have that consummate confidence in the sincerity of your wish to serve me, that delivers me from all awkward constraint, and from all fear of trespassing by acceptance. To you, therefore, I reply, yes. Whensoever and whatsoever, and in what manner soever you please; and add moreover that my affection for the giver is such as will increase to me tenfold the satisfaction that I shall have in receiving. It is necessary, however, that I should let you a little into the state of my finances, that you may not suppose them more narrowly circumscribed than they are. Since Mrs. Unwin and I have lived at Olney, we have had but one purse, although during the whole time, till lately, her income was nearly double mine. Her revenues indeed are now in some measure reduced, and not much exceed my own; the worst consequence of this is, that we are forced to deny ourselves some things which hitherto we have been better able to afford, but they are such things as neither life, nor the well-being of life, depend upon. My own income has been better than it is, but when

it was best, it would not have enabled me to live as my connexions demanded that I should, had it not been combined with a better than itself, at least at this end of the kingdom. Of this I had full proof during three months that I spent in lodgings at Huntingdon, in which time, by the help of good management and a clear notion of economical matters, I contrived to spend the income of a twelvemonth. Now, my beloved Cousin, you are in possession of the whole case as it stands. Strain no points to your own inconvenience or hurt, for there is no need of it, but indulge yourself in communicating (no matter what) that you can spare without missing it, since by so doing, you will be sure to add to the comforts of my life one of the sweetest that I can enjoy—a token and proof of your affection.

In the affair of my next publication,* toward which you also offer me so kindly your assistance, there will be no need that you should help me in the manner that you propose. It will be a large work, consisting I should imagine of six volumes at least. The 12th of this month I shall have spent a year upon it, and it will cost me more than another. I do not love the booksellers well enough to make them a present of such a labour, but intend to publish by subscription. Your vote and interest, my dear Cousin, upon the occasion, if you please, but nothing more! I will trouble you with some papers of proposals when the time shall come, and am sure that you will circulate as many for me as you can.

* His translation of Homer's Iliad.

Now, my dear, I am going to tell you a secret. It is a great secret, that you must not whisper even to your cat. No creature is at this moment apprized of it but Mrs. Unwin and her son. I am making a new translation of Homer, and am on the point of finishing the twenty-first book of the Iliad. The reasons upon which I undertake this Herculean labour, and by which I justify an enterprise in which I seem so effectually anticipated by Pope, although in fact he has not anticipated me at all, I may possibly give you, if you wish for them, when I can find nothing more interesting to say. A period which I do not conceive to be very near! I have not answered many things in your letter, nor can do it at present for want of room. I cannot believe but that I should know you, notwithstanding all that time may have done. There is not a feature of your face, could I meet it upon the road by itself, that I should not instantly recollect. I should say, that is my cousin's nose, or those are her lips and her chin, and no woman upon earth can claim them but herself. As for me, I am a very smart youth of my years. I am not indeed grown grey so much as I am grown bald. No matter. There was more hair in the world than ever had the honour to belong to me. Accordingly having found just enough to curl a little at my ears, and to intermix with a little of my own that still hangs behind, I appear, if you see me in an afternoon, to have a very decent head-dress, not easily distinguished from my natural growth, which being worn with a small bag, and a black riband about my neck, continues to me the

charms of my youth, even on the verge of age. Away with the fear of writing too often.

W. C.

P. S.—That the view I give you of myself may be complete I add the two following items—That I am in debt to nobody, and that I grow fat.

There is no date to the following letter, but it evidently refers to this period of time.

TO LADY HESKETH.

My dearest Cousin—I am glad that I always loved you as I did. It releases me from any occasion to suspect that my present affection for you is indebted for its existence to any selfish considerations. No, I am sure I love you disinterestedly and for your own sake, because I never thought of you with any other sensations than those of the truest affection, even while I was under the persuasion that I should never hear from you again. But, with my present feelings superadded to those that I always had for you, I find it no easy matter to do justice to my sensations. I perceive myself in a state of mind similar to that of the traveller described in Pope's Messiah, who, as he passes through a sandy desert, starts at the sudden and unexpected sound of a waterfall.* You have placed me in a situation new to

* The following is the passage alluded to:—

"The swain in barren deserts with surprise
Sees lilies spring, and sudden verdure rise;
And starts, amidst the thirsty wilds, to hear
New falls of water murm'ring in his ear."

Pope's Messiah, line 67, &c.

me, and in which I feel myself somewhat puzzled how to behave. At the same time I would not grieve you by putting a check upon your bounty, I would be as careful not to abuse it, as if I were a miser, and the question not about your money but my own.

Although I do not suspect that a secret to you, my Cousin, is any burthen, yet, having maturely considered that point since I wrote my last, I feel myself altogether disposed to release you from the injunction to that effect under which I laid you. I have now made such a progress in my translation that I need neither fear that I shall stop short of the end nor that any other rider of Pegasus should overtake me. Therefore, if at any time it should fall fairly in your way, or you should feel yourself invited to say I am so occupied, you have my poetship's free permission. Dr. Johnson read and recommended my first volume.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.*

Olney, Nov. 9, 1785.

My dear Friend—You desired me to return your good brother the bishop's Charge,† as soon as

* Cowper was at Westminster school with five brothers of this name. He retained through life the friendship of the estimable character to whom this letter is addressed.

† Lewis Bagot, D.D. He was formerly Dean of Christ Church, Oxford; afterwards Bishop of Norwich, and finally Bishop of St. Asaph.

conveniently could, and the weather having forbidden us to hope for the pleasure of seeing you and Mrs. Bagot with you this morning, I return it now, lest, as you told me that your stay in this country would be short, you should be gone before it could reach you.

I wish as you do, that the Charge in question could find its way into all the parsonages in the nation. It is so generally applicable, and yet so pointedly enforced, that it deserves the most extensive spread. I find in it the happiest mixture of spiritual authority, the meekness of a Christian, and the good manners of a gentleman. It has convinced me that the poet who, like myself, shall take the liberty to pay the author of such valuable admonition a compliment, shall do at least as much honour to himself as to his subject.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Dec. 3, 1785.

My dear Friend—I am glad to hear that there is such a demand for your last Narrative. If I may judge of their general utility by the effect that they have heretofore had upon me, there are few things more edifying than death-bed memoirs. They

* Private Correspondence.

interest every reader, because they speak of
period at which all must arrive, and afford a sol
ground of encouragement to survivors to expect th
same, or similar, support and comfort, when it sha
be their turn to die.

I also am employed in writing narrative, but no
so useful. Employment, however, and with the pe
is through habit become essential to my well-being
and to produce always original poems, especial
of considerable length, is not so easy. For son
weeks after I had finished "The Task," and se
away the last sheet corrected, I was through n
cessity idle, and suffered not a little in my spiri
for being so. One day, being in such distress
mind as was hardly supportable, I took up th
Iliad; and, merely to divert attention, and with
more preconception of what I was then enteri
upon than I have at this moment of what I sha
be doing this day twenty years hence, translat
the twelve first lines of it. The same necessi
pressing me again, I had recourse to the same e
pedient and translated more. Every day bringi
its occasion for employment with it, every da
consequently added something to the work; till
last I began to reflect thus:—The Iliad and th
Odyssey together consist of about forty thousa
verses. To translate these forty thousand vers
will furnish me with occupation for a considerab
time. I have already made some progress, and I fin
it a most agreeable amusement. Homer, in poi
of purity, is a most blameless writer; and thoug
he was not an enlightened man, has intersperse

/ great and valuable truths throughout both his
is. In short, he is in all respects a most vene-
old gentleman, by an acquaintance with whom
an can disgrace himself. The literati are all
ed to a man that, although Pope has given us two
y poems under Homer's titles, there is not to
und in them the least portion of Homer's spirit,
the least resemblance of his manner. I will
herefore whether I cannot copy him somewhat
happily myself. I have at least the advantage
ope's faults and failings, which, like so many
s upon a dangerous coast, will serve me to steer
nd will make my chance for success more pro-
. These and many other considerations, but
cially a mind that abhorred a vacuum as its
bane, impelled me so effectually to the work,
ere long I mean to publish proposals for a sub-
tion to it, having advanced so far as to be war-
d in doing so. I have connexions, and no few
, by means of which I have the utmost reason
pect that a brisk circulation may be procured;
f it should prove a profitable enterprise, the
t will not accrue to a man who may be said not
nt it. It is a business such as it will not in-
lie much in your way to promote; but among
numerous connexions it is possible that you
know some who would sufficiently interest them-
s in such a work to be not unwilling to subscribe
. I do not mean—far be it from me—to put
upon making hazardous applications, where you
it possibly incur a refusal, that would give you

though but a moment's pain. You know best your own opportunities and powers in such a cause. If you can do but little, I shall esteem it much; and if you can do nothing, I am sure that it will not be for want of a will.

I have lately had three visits from my old school-fellow Mr. Bagot, a brother of Lord Bagot, and of Mr. Chester of Chicheley. At his last visit he brought his wife with him, a most amiable woman, to see Mrs. Unwin. I told him my purpose and my progress. He received the news with great pleasure; immediately subscribed a draft of twenty pounds; and promised me his whole heart, and his whole interest, which lies principally among people of the first fashion.

My correspondence has lately also been renewed with my dear cousin Lady Hesketh, whom I ever loved as a sister, (for we were in a manner brought up together,) and who writes to me as affectionately as if she were so. She also enters into my views and interests upon this occasion with a warmth that gives me great encouragement. The circle of *her* acquaintance is likewise very extensive; and I have no doubt that she will exert her influence to its utmost possibilities among them. I have other strings to my bow, (perhaps, as a translator of Homer, I should say, to my lyre,) which I cannot here enumerate; but, upon the whole, my prospect seems promising enough. I have not yet consulted Johnson upon the occasion, but intend to do it soon.

My spirits are somewhat better than they were. In the course of the last month, I have perceived a very sensible amendment. The hope of better days seems again to dawn upon me; and I have now and then an intimation, though slight and transient, that God has not abandoned me for ever.

Having been for some years troubled with an inconvenient stomach; and lately with a stomach that will digest nothing without help; and we having reached the bottom of our own medical skill, into which we have dived to little or no purpose; I have at length consented to consult Dr. Kerr, and expect to see him in a day or two. Engaged as I am and am likely to be, so long as I am capable of it, in writing for the press, I cannot well afford to entertain a malady that is such an enemy to all mental operations.

This morning is beautiful, and tempts me forth into the garden. It is all the walk that I can have at this season, but not all the exercise. I ring a peal every day upon the dumb-bells.

I am, my dear friend, most truly,

Yours and Mrs. Newton's,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Dec. 10, 1785.

My dear Friend—What you say of my last volume gives me the sincerest pleasure. I have heard

* *Private* Correspondence.

a like favourable report of it from several different quarters, but never any (for obvious reasons) that has gratified me more than yours. I have a relish for moderate praise, because it bids fair to be judicious; but praise excessive, such as our poor friend ——'s, (I have an uncle also who celebrates me exactly in the same language,)—such praise is rather too big for an ordinary swallow. I set down nine-tenths of it to the account of family partiality. I know no more than you what kind of a market my book has found; but this I believe, that had not Henderson died,* and had it been worth my while to have given him an hundred pounds to have read it in public, it would have been more popular than it is. I am at least very unwilling to esteem John Gilpin as better worth than all the rest that I have written, and he has been popular enough.

Your sentiments of Pope's Homer agree perfectly with those of every competent judge with whom I have at any time conversed about it. I never saw a copy so unlike the original. There is not I believe in all the world to be found an uninspired poem so simple as those of Homer, nor in all the world a poem more bedizened with ornaments than Pope's translation of them. Accordingly, the sublime of Homer in the hands of Pope becomes bloated and tumid, and his description tawdry. Neither had Pope the faintest conception of those exquisite discriminations of character for which Homer is so re-

* A public reciter, well known in his day, who delivered his recitations with all the effect of tone, emphasis, and graceful elocution.

kable. All his persons, and equally upon all sions, speak in an inflated and strutting phrase- y as Pope has managed them; although in the inal the dignity of their utterance, even when are most majestic, consists principally in the licity of their sentiments and of their language. ther censure I must needs pass upon our Anglo- cian, out of many that obtrude themselves upon but for which I have neither time to spare, nor ı, which is, that with all his great abilities he defective in his feelings to a degree that some ages in his own poems make it difficult to ac- ıt for. No writer more pathetic than Homer, use none more natural; and because none less ral than Pope in his version of Homer, there- than he none less pathetic. But I shall tire with a theme with which I would not wish to you beforehand.

the great change in my experience, of which express so lively an expectation, should take e, and whenever it shall take place, you securely depend upon receiving the first notice . But, whether you come with congratulations, hether without them, I need not say that you yours will always be most welcome here. Mrs. in's love both to yourself and to Mrs. Newton itself as usual, and as warmly as usual, to of

Yours, my dear friend,
Affectionately and faithfully,
W. C.

The following this moment occurs to me as a possible motto for the Messiah, if you do not think it too sharp :—

—— Nunquam inducunt animum cantare, *rogati*;
Injussi, nunquam desistunt.———

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Dec. 24, 1785.

My dear Friend—You would have found a letter from me at Mr. ———'s, according to your assignation, had not the post, setting out two hours sooner than the usual time, prevented me. The Odyssey that you sent has but one fault, at least but one that I have discovered, which is that I cannot read it. The very attempt, if persevered in, would soon make me as blind as Homer was himself. I am now in the last book of the Iliad, shall be obliged to you therefore for a more legible one by the first opportunity.

I wrote to Johnson lately, desiring him to give me advice and information on the subject of proposals for a subscription, and he desired me in his answer not to use that mode of publication, but to treat with him, adding that he could make me such offers as (he believed) I should approve. I have replied to his letter, but abide by my first purpose.

Having occasion to write to Mr. ———, concerning his princely benevolence, extended this year also

to the poor of Olney, I put in a good word for my poor self likewise, and have received a very obliging and encouraging answer. He promises me six names in particular, that (he says) will do me no discredit, and expresses a wish to be served with papers as soon as they shall be printed.

I meet with encouragement from all quarters, such as I find need of indeed in an enterprise of such length and moment, but such as at the same time I find effectual. Homer is not a poet to be translated under the disadvantage of doubts and dejection.

Let me sing the praises of the desk which —— has sent me. In general, it is as elegant as possible. In particular, it is of cedar beautifully lacquered. When put together, it assumes the form of a handsome small chest, and contains all sorts of accommodations; it is inlaid with ivory, and serves the purpose of a reading desk.*

Your affectionate

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, Dec. 24, 1785.

My dear Friend—Till I had made such a progress in my present undertaking as to put it out of all doubt that, if I lived, I should proceed in and finish it, I kept the matter to myself. It would have done me little honour to have told my friends

* This interesting relic was bequeathed to Dr. Johnson, and is *now in the possession* of his family.

that I had an arduous enterprise in hand, if afterwards I must have told them that I had dropped it. Knowing it to have been universally the opinion of the literati, ever since they have allowed themselves to consider the matter coolly, that a translation, properly so called, of Homer is, notwithstanding what Pope has done, a desideratum in the English language; it struck me that an attempt to supply the deficiency would be an honourable one, and having made myself, in former years, somewhat critically a master of the original, I was by this double consideration induced to make the attempt myself. I am now translating into blank verse the last book of the Iliad, and mean to publish by subscription.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Dec. 31, 1785.

My dear William—You have learned from my last that I am now conducting myself upon the plan that you recommended to me in the summer. But since I wrote it, I have made still farther advances in my negociation with Johnson. The proposals are adjusted. The proof-sheet has been printed off, corrected, and returned. They will be sent abroad as soon as I make up a complete list of the personages and persons to whom I would have them sent, which in a few days I hope to be able to accomplish. Johnson behaves very well, at least according to *my* conception of the matter, and seems sensible

that I dealt liberally with him. He wishes me to be a gainer by my labours, in his own words, "to put something handsome into my pocket," and recommends two large quartos for the whole. He would not, he says, by any means advise an extravagant price, and has fixed it at three guineas, the half, as usual to be paid at the time of subscribing, the remainder on delivery. Five hundred names, he adds, at this price will put above a thousand pounds into my purse. I am doing my best to obtain them. Mr. Newton is warm in my service, and can do not a little. I have of course written to Mr. Bagot, who, when he was here, with much earnestness and affection intreated me so to do as soon as I could have settled the conditions. If I could get Sir Richard Sutton's address, I would write to him also, though I have been but once in his company since I left Westminster, where he and I read the Iliad and Odyssey through together. I enclose Lord Dartmouth's answer to my application, which I will get you to show to Lady Hesketh, because it will please her. I shall be glad if you can make an opportunity to call on her during your present stay in town. You observe therefore that I am not wanting to myself. He that is so has no just claim on the assistance of others, neither shall myself have cause to complain of me in other respects. I thank you for your friendly hints and precautions, and shall not fail to give them the guidance of my pen. I respect the public and I respect myself, and had rather want bread than expose myself wantonly to the condemnation of either. I hate the affectation,

so frequently found in authors, of negligence and slovenly slightness, and in the present case am sensible how necessary it is to shun them, when I undertake the vast and invidious labour of doing better than Pope has done before me. I thank you for all that you have said and done in my cause, and beforehand for all that you shall say and do hereafter. I am sure that there will be no deficiency on your part. In particular, I thank you for taking such jealous care of my honour and respectability, when the man you mention applied for samples of my translation. When I deal in wine, cloth, or cheese, I will give samples, but of verse never. No consideration would have induced me to comply with the gentleman's demand, unless he could have assured me that his wife had longed.

I have frequently thought with pleasure of the summer that you have had in your heart, while you have been employed in softening the severity of winter in behalf of so many who must otherwise have been exposed to it. I wish that you could make a general gaol-delivery, leaving only those behind who cannot elsewhere be so properly disposed of. You never said a better thing in your life than when you assured Mr. —— of the expedience of a gift of bedding to the poor of Olney. There is no one article of this world's comforts with which, as Falstaff says, they are so heinously unprovided. When a poor woman, and an honest one, whom we know well, carried home two pair of blankets, a pair for herself and husband, and a pair *for* her six children; as soon as the children saw

them, they jumped out of their straw, caught them in their arms, kissed them, blessed them, and danced for joy. An old woman, a very old one, the first night that she found herself so comfortably covered, could not sleep a wink, being kept awake by the contrary emotions of transport on the one hand, and the fear of not being thankful enough on the other.

It just occurs to me to say that this manuscript of mine will be ready for the press, as I hope, by the end of February. I shall have finished the Iliad in about ten days, and shall proceed immediately to the revisal of the whole. You must if possible come down to Olney, if it be only that you may take charge of its safe delivery to Johnson. For, if by any accident it should be lost, I am undone—the first copy being but a lean counterpart of the second.

Your mother joins with me in love and good wishes of every kind to you and all yours.

Adieu,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, Jan. 10, 1786.

It gave me great pleasure that you found my friend Unwin, what I was sure you would find him, a most agreeable man. I did not usher him in with the marrow-bones and cleavers of high-sounding panegyric, both because I was certain that, whatsoever merit he had, your discernment would mark

it, and because it is possible to do a man material injury by making his praise his harbinger. It is easy to raise expectation to such a pitch that the reality, be it ever so excellent, must necessarily fall below it.

I hold myself much indebted to Mr. ——, of whom I have the first information from yourself, both for his friendly disposition towards me, and for the manner in which he marks the defects in my volume. An author must be tender indeed to wince on being touched so gently. It is undoubtedly as he says, and as you and my uncle say, you cannot be all mistaken, neither is it at all probable that any of you should be so. I take it for granted, therefore, that there are inequalities in the composition, and I do assure you, my dear, most faithfully, that, if it should reach a second edition, I will spare no pains to improve it. It may serve me for an agreeable amusement perhaps when Homer shall be gone, and done with. The first edition of poems has generally been susceptible of improvement. Pope I believe never published one in his life that did not undergo variations, and his longest pieces many. I will only observe that inequalities there must be always, and in every work of length. There are level parts of every subject, parts which we cannot with propriety attempt to elevate. They are by nature humble, and can only be made to assume an awkward and uncouth appearance by being mounted. But again I take it for granted that this remark does not apply to the matter of your objection. You were sufficiently aware of it

before, and have no need that I should suggest it as an apology, could it have served that office, but would have made it for me yourself. In truth, my dear, had you known in what anguish of mind I wrote the whole of that poem, and under what perpetual interruptions from a cause that has since been removed, so that sometimes I had not an opportunity of writing more than three lines at a sitting, you would long since have wondered as much as I do myself that it turned out any thing better than Grub-street.

My Cousin, give yourself no trouble to find out any of the magi to scrutinize my Homer. I can do without them; and, if I were not conscious that I have no need of their help, I would be the first to call for it. Assure yourself that I intend to be careful to the utmost line of all possible caution, both with respect to language and versification. I will not send a verse to the press that shall not have undergone the strictest examination.

A subscription is surely on every account the most eligible mode of publication. When I shall have emptied the purses of my friends and of their friends into my own, I am still free to levy contributions upon the world at large, and I shall then have a fund to defray the expenses of a new edition. I have ordered Johnson to print the proposals immediately, and hope that they will kiss your hands before the week is expired.

I have had the kindest letter from Josephus that I ever had. He mentioned my purpose to one of

the masters of Eton, who replied, that "such a work is much wanted."

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Jan. 14, 1786.

My dear William—I am glad that you have seen Lady Hesketh. I knew that you would find her every thing that is amiable and elegant. Else, being my relation, I would never have shown her to you. She also was delighted with her visitor, and expects the greatest pleasure in seeing you again; but is under some apprehensions that a tender regard for the drum of your ear may keep you from her. Never mind! You have two drums, and if she should crack both, I will buy you a trumpet.

General Cowper having much pressed me to accompany my proposals with a specimen, I have sent him one. It is taken from the twenty-fourth book of the Iliad, and is part of the interview between Priam and Achilles. Tell me, if it be possible for any man to tell me—why did Homer leave off at the burial of Hector? Is it possible, that he could be determined to it by a conceit so little worthy of him as that, having made the number of his books completely the alphabetical number, he would not for the joke's sake proceed any further? Why did he not give us the death of Achilles, and the destruction of Troy? Tell me also if the critics, with Aristotle at their head, have not found that he left off

exactly where he should, and that every epic poem to all generations is bound to conclude with the burial of Hector? I do not in the least doubt it. Therefore if I live to write a dozen epic poems I will always take care to bury Hector, and to bring all matters at that point to an immediate conclusion.

I had a truly kind letter from Mr. ——, written immediately on his recovery from the fever. I am bound to honour James's powder, not only for the services it has often rendered to myself, but still more for having been the means of preserving a life ten times more valuable to society than mine is ever likely to be.

You say, "Why should I trouble you with my troubles?" I answer, "Why not? What is a friend good for, if we may not lay one end of the sack upon his shoulders, while we ourselves carry the other?"

You see your duty to God, and your duty to your neighbour; and you practise both with your best ability. Yet a certain person accounts you blind. I would, that all the world were so blind even as you are. But there are some in it who, like the Chinese, say, "We have two eyes; and other nations have but one!" I am glad however that in your one eye you have sight enough to discover that such censures are not worth minding.

I thank you heartily for every step you take in the advancement of my present purpose.

Contrive to pay Lady H. a long visit, for she has a thousand things to say.

Yours, my dear William,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Jan. 14, 1786.

My dear Friend — My proposals are already printed. I ought rather to say that they are ready for printing; having near ten days ago returned the correction of the proof. But a cousin of mine, and one who will I dare say be very active in my literary cause, (I mean General Cowper,) having earnestly recommended it to me to annex a specimen, I have accordingly sent him one, extracted from the latter part of the last book of the Iliad, and consisting of a hundred and seven lines. I chose to extract it from that part of the poem, because if the reader should happen to find himself content with it, he will naturally be encouraged by it to hope well of the part preceding. Every man who can do any thing in the translating way is pretty sure to set off with spirit; but in works of such a length, there is always danger of flagging near the close.

My subscription I hope will be more powerfully promoted than subscriptions generally are. I have a warm and affectionate friend in Lady Hesketh; and one equally disposed, and even still more able to serve me, in the General above mentioned. The Bagot family all undertake my cause with ardour; and I have several others, of whose ability and good-will I could not doubt without doing them injustice. It will however be necessary to bestow yet much time on the revisal of this work, for many

* Private Correspondence.

easons; and especially, because he who contends vith Pope upon Homer's ground can of all writers east afford to be negligent.

Mr. Scott brought me as much as he could remember of a kind message from Lord Dartmouth; but it was rather imperfectly delivered. Enough of it however came to hand to convince me that his lordship takes a friendly interest in my success. When his lordship and I sat side by side, on the sixth form at Westminster, we little thought that in process of time one of us was ordained to give a new translation of Homer. Yet at that very time it seems I was laying the foundation of this superstructure.

Much love upon all accounts to you and yours.

Adieu, my friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Olney, Jan. 15, 1786.

My dear Friend—I have just time to give you a asty line to explain to you the delay that the pubcation of my proposals has unexpectedly encouered, and at which I suppose that you have been omewhat surprised.

I have a near relation in London, and a warm riend in General Cowper; he is also a person as ble as willing to render me material service. I ately made him acquainted with my design of sendng into the world a new Translation of Homer, and

told him that my papers would soon attend him. He soon after desired that I would annex to them a specimen of the work. To this I at first objected, for reasons that need not be enumerated here, but at last acceded to his advice; and accordingly the day before yesterday I sent him a specimen. It consists of one hundred and seven lines, and is taken from the interview between Priam and Achilles in the last book. I chose to extract from the latter end of the poem, and as near to the close of it as possible, that I might encourage a hope in the readers of it, that if they found it in some degree worthy of their approbation, they would find the former parts of the work not less so. For if a writer flags any where, it must be when he is near the end.

My subscribers will have an option given them in the proposals respecting the price. My predecessor in the same business was not quite so moderate. You may say, perhaps, (at least if your kindness for me did not prevent it, you would be ready to say,) "It is well—but do you place yourself on a level with Pope?" I answer, or rather *should* answer, "By no means—not as a poet; but as a translator of Homer, if I did not expect and believe that I should even surpass him why have I meddled with this matter at all? If I confess inferiority, I reprobate my own undertaking."

When I can hear of the rest of the bishops that they preach and live as your brother does, I will think more respectfully of them than I feel inclined to do at present. They may be learned, and I know *that* some of them are; but your brother, learned

as he is, has other more powerful recommendations. Persuade him to publish his poetry, and I promise you that he shall find as warm and sincere an admirer in me as in any man that lives.

Yours, my dear friend,

Very affectionately,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Olney, Jan. 23, 1786.

My dear and faithful Friend— * *

* * * *

The paragraph that I am now beginning will contain information of a kind that I am not very fond of communicating, and on a subject that I am not very fond of writing about. Only to you I will open my budget without any reserve, because I know that in what concerns my authorship you take an interest that demands my confidence, and will be pleased with every occurrence that is at all propitious to my endeavours. Lady Hesketh, who, had she as many mouths as Virgil's Fame, with a tongue in each, would employ them all in my service, writes me word that Dr. Maty of the Museum has read my "Task." I cannot, even to you, relate what he says of it, though, when I began this story, I thought I had courage enough to tell it boldly. He designs however to give his opinion of it in his next Monthly Review, and, being informed that I was about to *finish a translation* of Homer, asked

her ladyship's leave to mention the circumstance on that occasion. This incident pleases me the more, because I have authentic intelligence of his being a critical character, in all its forms, acute, sour, and blunt, and so incorruptible withal, and so unsusceptible of bias from undue motives, that, as my correspondent informs me, he would not praise his own mother, did he not think she deserved it.

The said "Task" is likewise gone to Oxford, conveyed thither by an intimate friend of Dr. ——, with a purpose of putting it into his hands. My friend, what will they do with me at Oxford? Will they burn me at Carfax, or will they anathematize me with bell, book, and candle? I can say with more truth than Ovid did—*Parve, nec invideo.*

The said Dr. —— has been heard to say, and I give you his own words, (stop both your ears while I utter them,) "that Homer has never been translated, and that Pope was a fool." Very irreverend language, to be sure, but, in consideration of the subject on which he used them, we will pardon it, even in a dean.* One of the masters of Eton told a friend of mine lately that a translation of Homer is much wanted. So now you have all my news.

Yours, my dear friend, cordially,

W. C.

* The person here alluded to is Dr. Cyril Jackson, dean of Christ Church, Oxford, a man of profound acquirements and of great classical taste. He was formerly preceptor to the Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, Jan. 31, 1786.

It is very pleasant, my dearest Cousin, to receive a present so delicately conveyed as that which I received so lately from Anonymous; but it is also very painful to have nobody to thank for it. I find myself therefore driven by stress of necessity to the following resolutions, viz. that I will constitute you my Thanks-receiver-general, for whatsoever gift I shall receive hereafter, as well as for those that I have already received from a nameless benefactor. I therefore thank you, my Cousin, for a most elegant present, including the most elegant compliment that ever poet was honoured with; for a snuff-box of tortoiseshell, with a beautiful landscape on the lid of it, glazed with crystal, having the figures of three hares in the fore-ground, and inscribed above with these words, *The Peasant's Nest*—and below with these, *Tiney, Puss, and Bess.* For all and every of these I thank you, and also for standing proxy on this occasion. Nor must I forget to thank you that so soon after I had sent you the first letter of Anonymous, I received another in the same hand.—There! Now I am a little easier.

I have almost conceived a design to send up half a dozen stout country-fellows to tie by the leg to their respective bed-posts the company that so abridges your opportunity of writing to me. Your letters are the joy of my heart, and I cannot endure to be robbed, by I know not whom, of half

my treasure. But there is no comfort without a drawback, and therefore it is that I who have unknown friends have unknown enemies also. Ever since I wrote last, I find myself in better health, and my nocturnal spasms and fever considerably abated. I intend to write to Dr. Kerr on Thursday, that I may gratify him with an account of my amendment: for to him I know that it will be a gratification. Were he not a physician, I should regret that he lives so distant, for he is a most agreeable man ;* but, being what he is, it would be impossible to have his company, even if he were a neighbour, unless in time of sickness, at which time, whatever charms he might have himself, my own must necessarily lose much of their effect on him.

When I write to you, my dear, what I have already related to the General, I am always fearful lest I should tell you that for news with which you are well acquainted. For once, however, I will venture. On Wednesday last I received from Johnson the MS. copy of a specimen that I had sent to the General, and inclosed in the same cover Notes upon it by an unknown critic. Johnson, in a short letter, recommended him to me as a man of unquestionable learning and ability. On perusal and consideration of his remarks, I found him such, and, having nothing so much at heart as to give all possible security to yourself and the General that my work shall not come forth unfinished, I answered Johnson

* Dr. Kerr was an eminent physician, in great practice, and resident at Northampton.

that I would gladly submit my MS. to his friend. He is in truth a very clever fellow, perfectly a stranger to me, and one who, I promise you, will not spare for severity of animadversion, where he shall find occasion. It is impossible for you, my dearest Cousin, to express a wish that I do not equally feel a wish to gratify. You are desirous that Maty should see a book of my Homer, and for that reason, if Maty *will* see a book of it, he shall be welcome, although time is likely to be precious, and consequently any delay that is not absolutely necessary as much as possible to be avoided. I am now revising the "Iliad." It is a business that will cost me four months, perhaps five; for I compare the very words as I go, and, if much alteration should occur, must transcribe the whole. The first book I have almost transcribed already. To these five months Johnson says that nine more must be added for printing, and upon my own experience, I will venture to assure you that the tardiness of printers will make those nine months twelve. There is danger therefore that my subscribers may think that I make them wait too long, and that they who know me not may suspect a bubble. How glad shall I be to read it over in an evening, book by book, as fast as I settle the copy, to you and to Mrs. Unwin! She has been my touchstone always, and without reference to her taste and judgment I have printed nothing. With one of you at each elbow, I should think myself the happiest of all poets.

The General and I, having broken the ice, are

upon the most comfortable terms of correspondence. He writes very affectionately to me, and I say every thing that comes uppermost. I could not write frequently to any creature living upon any other terms than those. He tells me of infirmities that he has, which make him less active than he was. I am sorry to hear that he has any such. Alas! alas! he was young when I saw him, only twenty years ago.

I have the most affectionate letter imaginable from Colman, who writes to me like a brother. The Chancellor is yet dumb.

May God have you in his keeping, my beloved Cousin.

Farewell,

W. C.

Lady Hesketh having announced her intention of paying a visit to Cowper, the following letters abound in all that delightful anticipation, which the prospect of renewing so endeared an intercourse naturally suggested.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, Feb. 9, 1786.

My dearest Cousin—I have been impatient to tell you that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Unwin partakes with me in all my feelings upon this subject, and longs also to see you. I should have told you so by the last post, but have been so

completely occupied by this tormenting specimen, that it was impossible to do it. I sent the General a letter on Monday that would distress and alarm him; I sent him another yesterday, that will, I hope, quiet him again. Johnson has apologized very civilly for the multitude of his friend's strictures; and his friend has promised to confine himself in future to a comparison with the original, so that (I doubt not) we shall jog on merrily together. And now, my dear, let me tell you once more that your kindness in promising us a visit has charmed us both. I shall see you again. I shall hear your voice. We shall take walks together. I will show you my prospects, the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse, and its banks, every thing that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn! Mention it not for your life! We have never had so many visitors but we could easily accommodate them all, though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son, all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June, because, before that time my green-house will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats; and there you shall sit, with a bed of mignonette at your side, and a hedge of honeysuckles, roses, and jasmine; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention the country will not be in complete beauty. And I

will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. Imprimis, as soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box in which have been lodged all my hares, and in which lodges Puss at present. But he, poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand stands a cupboard, the work of the same author; it was once a dove-cage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table, which I also made. But, a merciless servant having scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament; and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the farther end of this superb vestibule, you will find the door of the parlour, into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, unless we should meet her before, and where we will be as happy as the day is long. Order yourself, my Cousin, to the Swan, at Newport, and there you shall find me ready to conduct you to Olney.

My dear, I have told Homer what you say about casks and urns, and have asked him whether he is sure that it is a cask in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He swears that it is a cask, and that it will never be any thing better than a cask to eternity. So if the god is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so too.

Adieu! my dearest, dearest Cousin,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, Feb. 11, 1786.

My dearest Cousin—It must be, I suppose, a fortnight or thereabout since I wrote last, I feel myself so alert and so ready to write again. Be that as it may, here I come. We talk of nobody but you. What we will do with you when we get you, where you shall walk, where you shall sleep, in short every thing that bears the remotest relation to your well-being at Olney, occupies all our talking time, which is all that I do not spend at Troy.

I have every reason for writing to you as often as I can, but I have a particular reason for doing it now. I want to tell you, that by the Diligence on Wednesday next I mean to send you a quire of my Homer for Maty's perusal. It will contain the first book, and as much of the second as brings us to the catalogue of the ships, and is every morsel of the revised copy that I have transcribed. My dearest Cousin, read it yourself, let the General read it, do what you please with it, so that it reach Johnson in due time. But let Maty be the only *Critic* that has any thing to do with it. The vexation, the perplexity, that attends a multiplicity of criticisms by various hands, many of which are sure to be futile, many of them ill-founded, and some of them contradictory to others, is inconceivable, except by the author, whose ill-fated work happens

to be the subject of them. This also appears to me self-evident, that if a work have passed under the review of one man of taste and learning, and have had the good fortune to please him, his approbation gives security for that of all others qualified like himself. I speak thus, my dear, after having just escaped from such a storm of trouble, occasioned by endless remarks, hints, suggestions, and objections, as drove me almost to despair, and to the very verge of a resolution to drop my undertaking for ever. With infinite difficulty I at last sifted the chaff from the wheat, availing myself of what appeared to me to be just, and rejected the rest, but not till the labour and anxiety had nearly undone all that Kerr had been doing for me. My beloved Cousin, trust me for it, as you safely may, that temper, vanity, and self-importance had nothing to do in all this distress that I suffered. It was merely the effect of an alarm that I could not help taking, when I compared the great trouble I had with a few lines only, thus handled, with that which I foresaw such handling of the whole must necessarily give me. I felt beforehand that my constitution would not bear it. I shall send up this second specimen in a box that I have had made on purpose; and when Maty has done with the copy, and you have done with it yourself, then you must return it in said box to my translatorship. Though Johnson's friend has teased me sadly, I verily believe that I shall have no more such cause to complain of him. We now understand one another, and I firmly believe that I might have gone the world through

before I had found his equal in an accurate and familiar acquaintance with the original.

A letter to Mr. Urban in the last Gentleman's Magazine, of which I's book is the subject, pleases me more than any thing I have seen in the way of eulogium yet. I have no guess of the author.

I do not wish to remind the Chancellor of his promise. Ask you why, my Cousin? Because I suppose it would be impossible. He has no doubt, forgotten it entirely, and would be obliged to take my word for the truth of it, which I could not bear. We drank tea together with Mrs. C——e, and her sister, in King-street, Bloomsbury, and there was the promise made. I said, "Thurlow, I am nobody, and shall be always nobody, and you will be Chancellor. You shall provide for me when you are." He smiled, and replied, "I surely will." "These ladies," said I, "are witnesses." He still smiled, and said "Let them be so, for I will certainly do it." But alas! twenty-four years have passed since the day of the date thereof; and to mention it now would be to upbraid him with inattention to his plighted troth. Neither do I suppose that he could easily serve such a creature as I am, if he would.

Adieu, whom I love entirely,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Feb. 18, 1786.

My dear Friend—I feel myself truly obliged to you for the leave that you give me to be less frequent in writing, and more brief than heretofore. I have a long work upon my hands; and, standing engaged to the public (for by this time I suppose my subscription papers to be gone abroad, not only for the performance of it, but for the performance of it in a reasonable time,) it seems necessary to me not to intermit it often. My correspondence has also lately been renewed with several of my relations, and unavoidably engrosses now and then one of the few opportunities that I can find for writing. I nevertheless intend, in the exchange of letters with you, to be as regular as I can be, and to use, like a friend, the friendly allowance that you have made me.

My reason for giving notice of an Odyssey as well as an Iliad, was this:—I feared that the public, being left to doubt whether I should ever translate the former, would be unwilling to treat with me for the latter; which they would be apt to consider as an odd volume, and unworthy to stand upon their shelves alone. It is hardly probable however, that I should begin the Odyssey for some months to come, being now closely engaged in the revisal of my translation of the Iliad, which I compare as I go most minutely with the original. One of the great defects of Pope's transla-

* Private Correspondence.

tion is that it is licentious. To publish therefore a translation now, that should be at all chargeable with the same fault, that were not indeed as close and as faithful as possible, would be only *actum agere*, and had therefore better be left undone. Whatever be said of mine when it shall appear, it shall never be said that it is not faithful.

I thank you heartily, both for your wishes and prayers that, should a disappointment occur, I may not be too much hurt by it. Strange as it may seem to say it, and unwilling as I should be to say it to any person less candid than yourself, I will nevertheless say that I have not entered on this work, unconnected as it must needs appear with the interests of the cause of God, without the direction of his providence, nor altogether unassisted by him in the performance of it. Time will show to what it ultimately tends. I am inclined to believe that it has a tendency to which I myself am at present perfectly a stranger. Be that as it may, he knows my frame, and will consider that I am but dust; dust, into the bargain, that has been so trampled under foot and beaten, that a storm, less violent than an unsuccessful issue of such a business might occasion, would be sufficient to blow me quite away. But I will tell you honestly, I have no fears upon the subject. My predecessor has given me every advantage.

As I know not to what end this my present occupation may finally lead, so neither did I know, when I wrote it, or at all suspect one valuable end at least that was to be answered by "The Task." It has pleased God to prosper it; and, being composed

in blank verse, it is likely to prove as seasonable an introduction to a blank verse Homer by the same hand as any that could have been devised; yet, when I wrote the last line of "The Task," I as little suspected that I should ever engage in a version of the old Asiatic tale as you do now.

I should choose for your general motto:—

Carmina tum melius, cùm venerit ipse, canemus.

For Vol. I.

Unum pro multis dabitur caput.

For Vol. II.

Aspice, venturo lætentur ut omnia sæclo.

It seems to me that you cannot have better than these.

Yours, my dear friend,
W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, Feb. 19, 1786.

My dearest Cousin—Since so it must be, so it shall be. If you will not sleep under the roof of a friend, may you never sleep under the roof of an enemy! An enemy, however, you will not presently find. Mrs. Unwin bids me mention her affectionately, and tell you that she willingly gives up a part, for the sake of the rest—willingly, at least as far as

willingly may consist with some reluctance: I feel my reluctance too. Our design was that you should have slept in the room that serves me for a study, and its having been occupied by you would have been an additional recommendation of it to me. But all reluctances are superseded by the thought of seeing you; and because we have nothing so much at heart as the wish to see you happy and comfortable, we are desirous therefore to accommodate you to your own mind, and not to ours. Mrs. Unwin has already secured for you an apartment, or rather two, just such as we could wish. The house in which you will find them is within thirty yards of our own, and opposite to it. The whole affair is thus commodiously adjusted; and now I have nothing to do but to wish for June; and June, my Cousin, was never so wished for since June was made. I shall have a thousand things to hear, and a thousand to say, and they will all rush into my mind together, till it will be so crowded with things impatient to be said, that for some time I shall say nothing. But no matter—sooner or later they will all come out; and since we shall have you the longer for not having you under our own roof, (a circumstance that more than any thing reconciles us to that measure,) they will stand the better chance. After so long a separation, a separation that of late seemed likely to last for life, we shall meet each other as alive from the dead; and for my own part I can truly say, that I have not a friend in the other world whose resurrection would give me greater pleasure.

I am truly happy, my dear, in having pleased you

with what you have seen of my Homer. I wish that all English readers had your unsophisticated, or rather unadulterated taste, and could relish simplicity like you. But I am well aware that in this respect I am under a disadvantage, and that many, especially many ladies, missing many turns and prettinesses of expression, that they have admired in Pope, will account my translation in those particulars defective. But I comfort myself with the thought, that in reality it is no defect, on the contrary, that the want of all such embellishments as do not belong to the original will be one of its principal merits with persons indeed capable of relishing Homer. He is the best poet that ever lived for many reasons, but for none more than for that majestic plainness that distinguishes him from all others. As an accomplished person moves gracefully without thinking of it, in like manner the dignity of Homer seems to cost him no labour. It was natural to him to say great things, and to say them well, and little ornaments were beneath his notice. If Maty, my dearest Cousin, should return to you my copy, with any such strictures as may make it necessary for me to see it again, before it goes to Johnson, in that case you shall send it to me, otherwise to Johnson immediately; for he writes me word he wishes his friend to go to work upon it as soon as possible. When you come, my dear, we will hang all these critics together; for they have worried me without remorse or conscience. At least one of them has. I had actually murdered more than a few of the best lines in the specimen, in compliance

with his requisitions, but plucked up my courage at last, and, in the very last opportunity that I had, recovered them to life again by restoring the original reading. At the same time I readily confess that the specimen is the better for all this discipline its author has undergone, but then it has been more indebted for its improvement to that pointed accuracy of examination to which I was myself excited, than to any proposed amendments from Mr. Critic; for, as sure as you are my Cousin, whom I long to see at Olney, so surely would he have done me irreparable mischief, if I would have given him leave.

My friend Bagot writes to me in a most friendly strain, and calls loudly upon me for original poetry. When I shall have done with Homer, probably he will not call in vain. Having found the prime feather of a swan on the banks of the *smug and silver Trent*, he keeps it for me.

Adieu, dear Cousin,

W. C.

I am sorry that the General has such indifferent health. He must not die. I can by no means spare a person so kind to me.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Olney, Feb. 27, 1786.

Alas! alas! my dear, dear friend, may God himself comfort you! I will not be so absurd as to attempt it.* By the close of your letter, it should

* Mr. Bagot had recently sustained the loss of his wife.

seem that in this hour of great trial he withholds not his consolations from you. I know, by experience, that they are neither few nor small; and though I feel for you as I never felt for man before, yet do I sincerely rejoice in this, that, whereas there is but one true comforter in the universe, under afflictions such as yours, you both know Him and know where to seek Him. I thought you a man the most happily mated that I had ever seen, and had great pleasure in your felicity. Pardon me, if now I feel a wish that, short as my acquaintance with her was, I had never seen her. I should have mourned with you, but not as I do now. Mrs. Unwin sympathizes with you also most sincerely, and you neither are nor will be soon forgotten in such prayers as we can make at Olney. I will not detain you longer now, my poor afflicted friend, than to commit you to the tender mercy of God, and to bid you a sorrowful adieu!

Adieu! Ever yours,
W C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, March 6, 1786.

My dearest Cousin—Your opinion has more weight with me than that of all the critics in the world; and, to give you a proof of it, I make you a concession that I would hardly have made to them all united. I do not indeed absolutely covenant, promise, and agree, *that* I will discard *all* my elisions, but I hereby bind

myself to dismiss *as many* of them as, without sacrificing energy to sound, I can. It is incumbent upon me in the mean time to say something in justification of the few that I shall retain, that I may not seem a poet mounted rather on a mule than on Pegasus. In the first place, *The* is a barbarism. We are indebted for it to the Celts, or the Goths, or to the Saxons, or perhaps to them all. In the two best languages that ever were spoken, the Greek and the Latin, there is no similar incumbrance of expression to be found. Secondly, the perpetual use of it in our language is, to us miserable poets, attended with two great inconveniences. Our verse consisting only of ten syllables, it not unfrequently happens that the fifth part of a line is to be engrossed, and necessarily too, unless elision prevents it, by this abominable intruder, and which is worse in my account, open vowels are continually the consequence—*The* element—*The* air, &c. Thirdly, the French, who are equally with the English chargeable with barbarism in this particular, dispose of their *Le* and their *La* without ceremony, and always take care that they shall be absorbed, both in verse and in prose, in the vowel that immediately follows them. Fourthly, and I believe lastly, (and for your sake I wish it may prove so,) the practice of cutting short *The* is warranted by Milton, who of all English poets that ever lived, had certainly the finest ear. Dr. Warton indeed has dared to say that he had a bad one, for which he deserves, as far as critical demerit can deserve it, to lose his own. I thought I had done, but there is still a fifthly behind; and

it is this, that the custom of abbreviating *The*, belongs to the style in which, in my advertisement annexed to the specimen, I profess to write. The use of that style would have warranted me in the practice of much greater liberty of this sort than I ever intended to take. In perfect consistence with that style, I might say, I' th' tempest, I' th' doorway, &c. which, however, I would not allow myself to do, because I was aware that it would be objected to, and with reason. But it seems to me, for the causes above said, that when I shorten *The*, before a vowel, or before *wh*, as in the line you mention,

"Than th' whole broad Hellespont in all its parts,"

my licence is not equally exceptionable, because *W*, though he rank as a consonant, in the word *whole*, is not allowed to announce himself to the ear; and *H* is an aspirate. But as I said in the beginning, so say I still, I am most willing to conform myself to your very sensible observation, that it is necessary, if we would please, to consult the taste of our own day; neither would I have pelted you, my dearest Cousin, with any part of this volley of good reasons, had I not designed them as an answer to those objections, which you say you have heard from others. But I only mention them. Though satisfactory to myself, I wave them, and will allow to *The* his whole dimensions, whensoever it can be done.

Thou only critic of my verse that is to be found in all the earth, whom I love, what shall I say in answer to your own objection to that passage?

"Softly he placed his hand
On th' old man's hand, and pushed it gently away."

I can say neither more nor less than this, that when our dear friend, the General, sent me his opinion on the specimen, quoting those very words from it, he added—"With this part I was particularly pleased: there is nothing in poetry more descriptive." Such were his very words. Taste, my dear, is various; there is nothing so various; and even between persons of the best taste there are diversities of opinion on the same subject, for which it is not possible to account. So much for these matters.

You advise me to consult the General and to confide in him. I follow your advice, and have done both. By the last post I asked his permission to send him the books of my Homer, as fast as I should finish them off. I shall be glad of his remarks, and more glad, than of any thing, to do that which I hope may be agreeable to him. They will of course pass into your hands before they are sent to Johnson. The quire that I sent is now in the hands of Johnson's friend. I intended to have told you in my last, but forgot it, that Johnson behaves very handsomely in the affair of my two volumes. He acts with a liberality not often found in persons of his occupation, and to mention it when occasion calls me to it is a justice due to him.

I am very much pleased with Mr. Stanley's letter —several compliments were paid me on the subject of that first volume by my own friends, but I do not recollect that I ever knew the opinion of a stranger about it before, whether favourable or otherwise; I

only heard by a side wind that it was very much read in Scotland, and more than here.

Farewell, my dearest Cousin, whom we expect, of whom we talk continually, and whom we continually long for.

W. C.

P. S. Your anxious wishes for my success delight me, and you may rest assured, my dear, that I have all the ambition on the subject that you can wish me to feel. I more than admire my author. I often stand astonished at his beauties: I am for ever amused with the translation of him, and I have received a thousand encouragements. These are all so many happy omens that I hope shall be verified by the event.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, March 13, 1786.

My dear Friend—I seem to be about to write to you, but I foresee that it will not be a letter, but a scrap that I shall send you. I could tell you things, that, knowing how much you interest yourself in my success, I am sure would please you, but every moment of my leisure is necessarily spent at Troy. I am revising my translation, and bestowing on it more labour than at first. At the repeated solicitation of General Cowper, who had doubtless irrefragable reason on his side, I have put my book into the hands of the most extraordinary critic that I

have ever heard of. He is a Swiss; has an accurate knowledge of English, and, for his knowledge of Homer, has I verily believe no fellow. Johnson recommended him to me. I am to send him the quires as fast as I finish them off, and the first is now in his hands. I have the comfort to be able to tell you that he is very much pleased with what he has seen: Johnson wrote to me lately on purpose to tell me so. Things having taken this turn, I fear that I must beg a release from my engagement to put the MS. into your hands. I am bound to print as soon as three hundred shall have subscribed, and consequently have not an hour to spare.

People generally love to go where they are admired, yet Lady Hesketh complains of not having seen you.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, April 1, 1786.

My dear Friend—I have made you wait long for an answer, and am now obliged to write in a hurry. But, lest my longer silence should alarm you, hurried as I am, still I write. I told you, if I mistake not, that the circle of my correspondence has lately been enlarged, and it seems still increasing; which, together with my poetical business, makes an *hour* a *momentous* affair. Pardon an unintentional pun. You

* Private Correspondence.

need not fear for my health: it suffers nothing by my employment.

We who in general see no company are at present in expectation of a great deal, at least, if three different visits may be called so. Mr. and Mrs. Powley, in the first place, are preparing for a journey southward. She is far from well, but thinks herself well enough to travel, and feels an affectionate impatience for another sight of Olney.

In the next place, we expect, as soon as the season shall turn up bright and warm, General Cowper and his son. I have not seen him these twenty years and upwards, but our intercourse, having been lately revived, is likely to become closer, warmer, and more intimate than ever.

Lady Hesketh also comes down in June, and if she can be accommodated with any thing in the shape of a dwelling at Olney, talks of making it always, in part, her summer residence. It has pleased God that I should, like Joseph, be put into a well, and, because there are no Midianites in the way to deliver me, therefore my friends are coming down into the well to see me.

I wish you, we both wish you, all happiness in your new habitation: at least you will be sure to find the situation more commodious. I thank you for all your hints concerning my work, which shall be duly attended to. You may assure all whom it may concern, that all offensive elisions will be done away. With Mrs. Unwin's love to yourself and Mrs. Newton, I remain, my dear friend, affectionately yours, W. C.

The friends of Cowper were not without alarm at his engaging in so lengthened and perilous an undertaking as a new version of the Iliad, when the popular translation of Pope seemed to render such an attempt superfluous. To one of his correspondents, who urged this objection, he makes the following reply.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, April 5, 1786.

I did, as you suppose, bestow all possible consideration on the subject of an apology for my Homerican undertaking. I turned the matter about in my mind a hundred different ways, and, in every way in which it would present itself, found it an impracticable business. It is impossible for me, with what delicacy soever I may manage it, to state the objections that lie against Pope's translation, without incurring odium and the imputation of arrogance; foreseeing this danger, I choose to say nothing.

W. C.

P. S. You may well wonder at my courage, who have undertaken a work of such enormous length. You would wonder more if you knew that I translated the whole Iliad with no other help than a Clavis. But I have since equipped myself better for this immense journey, and am revising the work in company with a good commentator.

The motives *which* induced Cowper to engage in

a new version of the Iliad originated in the conviction, that, however Pope's translation might be embellished with harmonious numbers, and all the charm and grace of poetic diction, it failed in being a correct and faithful representation of that immortal production. Its character is supposed to be justly designated by its title of "Pope's Homer." It is not the Homer of the heroic ages; it does not express his majesty—his unadorned, yet sublime simplicity. It is Homer in modern costume, decked in a court dress, and in the trappings of refined taste and fashion. His sententious brevity, which possesses the art of conveying much compressed in a short space, is also expanded and dilated, till it resembles a paraphrase, and an imitation, rather than a just and accurate version of its expressive, and speaking original. We believe this to be the general estimate of the merits of Pope's translation. Profound scholars, and one especially, whose discriminating taste and judgment conferred authority on his decision, Dr. Cyril Jackson, (formerly the well-known Dean of Christ Church, Oxford,) concur in this opinion. But notwithstanding this redundance of artificial ornament, and the "laboured elegance of polished version," the translation of Pope will perhaps always retain its pre-eminence, and be considered what Johnson calls it, "the noblest version of poetry which the world has ever seen," and "its publication one of the greatest events in the annals of learning."*

* See Johnson's Life of Pope. The original manuscript copy of Pope's translation is said to be in the British Museum.

Of the merits of Cowper's translation, we shall have occasion hereafter to speak. But it is due to the cause of sound criticism, and to the merited claims of his laborious undertaking, to declare that he who would wish to know and understand Homer must seek for him in the expressive and unadorned version of Cowper.

In the course of the following letters we shall discover many interesting particulars of the progress of this undertaking.

Cowper was now looking forward with great anxiety, to the promised visit of Lady Hesketh. The following letter adverts to the preparations making at the vicarage at Olney for her reception; and to her delicate mode of administering to his personal comforts and enjoyments.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, April 17, 1786.

My dearest Cousin—If you will not quote Solomon, my dearest Cousin, I will. He says, and as beautifully as truly—"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life!" I feel how much reason he had on his side when he made this observation, and am myself sick of your fortnight's delay.

* * * *

The vicarage was built by Lord Dartmouth, and was not finished till some time after we arrived at

Olney, consequently it is new. It is a smart stone building, well sashed, by much too good for the living, but just what I would wish for you. It has, as you justly concluded from my premises, a garden, but rather calculated for use than ornament. It is square, and well walled, but has neither arbour nor alcove, nor other shade, except the shadow of the house. But we have two gardens, which are yours. Between your mansion and ours is interposed nothing but an orchard, into which a door, opening out of our garden, affords us the easiest communication imaginable, will save the round about by the town, and make both houses one. Your chamber-windows look over the river, and over the meadows, to a village called Emberton, and command the whole length of a long bridge, described by a certain poet, together with a view of the road at a distance.* Should you wish for books at Olney, you must bring them with you, or you will wish in vain, for I have none but the works of a certain poet, Cowper, of whom perhaps you have heard, and they are as yet but two volumes. They may multiply hereafter, but at present they are no more.

You are the first person for whom I have heard Mrs. Unwin express such feelings as she does for you. She is not profuse in professions, nor forward to enter into treaties of friendship with new faces,

* Hark! 'tis the twanging horn o'er yonder bridge,
That with its wearisome but needful length
Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright.
The Task, Book 4th.

but when her friendship is once engaged, it may be confided in, even unto death. She loves you already, and how much more will she love you before this time twelve-month! I have indeed endeavoured to describe you to her, but, perfectly as I have you by heart, I am sensible that my picture cannot do you justice. I never saw one that did. Be you what you may, you are much beloved, and will be so at Olney, and Mrs. U. expects you with the pleasure that one feels at the return of a long absent, dear relation; that is to say, with a pleasure such as mine. She sends you her warmest affections.

On Friday, I received a letter from dear Anonymous,* apprizing me of a parcel that the coach would bring me on Saturday. Who is there in the world that has, or thinks he has, reason to love me to the degree that he does? But it is no matter. He chooses to be unknown, and his choice is, and ever shall be so sacred to me, that, if his name lay on the table before me reversed, I would not turn the paper about, that I might read it. Much as it would gratify me to thank him, I would turn my eyes away from the forbidden discovery. I long to assure him that those same eyes, concerning which he expresses such kind apprehensions, lest they should suffer by this laborious undertaking, are as well as I could expect them to be, if I were never to touch either book or pen. Subject to weakness and occasional slight inflammations it is probable that they will always be, but I cannot remember the time

* Lady Hesketh adopted this delicate mode of extending pecuniary relief to the Poet.

when they enjoyed any thing so like an exemption from those infirmities as at present. One would almost suppose that reading Homer were the best ophthalmic in the world. I should be happy to remove his solicitude on the subject, but it is a pleasure that he will not let me enjoy. Well then, I will be content without it; and so content, that though I believe you, my dear, to be in full possession of all this mystery, you shall never know me, while you live, either directly, or by hints of any sort, attempt to extort or to steal the secret from you: I should think myself as justly punishable as the Bethshemites, for looking into the ark, which they were not allowed to touch.

I have not sent for Kerr,* for Kerr can do nothing but send me to Bath, and to Bath I cannot go for a thousand reasons. The summer will set me up again; I grow fat every day, and shall be as big as Gog or Magog, or both put together, before you come.

I did actually live three years with Mr. Chapman, a solicitor, that is to say, I slept three years in his house, but I lived, that is to say, I spent my days in Southampton Row, as you very well remember. There was I, and the future Lord Chancellor, constantly employed from morning to night in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law. Oh fie, Cousin! how could you do so? I am pleased with 'Lord Thurlow's inquiries about me. If he takes it into that inimitable head of his, he may make a man of me yet. I could love him heartily, if he would deserve it at my hands. That I did so

* Dr. Kerr, of Northampton.

once is certain. The Duchess of ———, who in the world set her agoing? But if all the duchesses in the world were spinning, like so many whirligigs, for my benefit, I would not stop them. It is a noble thing to be a poet, it makes all the world so lively. I might have preached more sermons than even Tillotson did, and better, and the world would have been still fast asleep, but a volume of verse is a fiddle that puts the universe in motion.

Yours,

My dear friend, and Cousin,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, April 24, 1786.

Your letters are so much my comfort, that I often tremble lest by any accident I should be disappointed; and the more, because you have been, more than once, so engaged in company on the writing day, that I have had a narrow escape. Let me give you a piece of good counsel, my Cousin: follow my laudable example, write when you can, take time's forelock in one hand and a pen in the other, and so make sure of your opportunity. It is well for me that you write faster than any body, and more in an hour than other people in two, else I know not what would become of me. When I read your letters, I hear you talk, and I love talking letters dearly, especially from you. Well! the middle of June will not be always a thousand years off, and when it comes I shall hear you, and see you too, and shall

not care a farthing then if you do not touch a pen in a month. By the way, you must either send me or bring me some more paper, for before the moon shall have performed a few more revolutions, I shall not have a scrap left, and tedious revolutions they are just now, that is certain.

I give you leave to be as peremptory as you please, especially at a distance; but, when you say that you are a Cowper, (and the better it is for the Cowpers that such you are, and I give them joy of you, with all my heart,) you must not forget, that I boast myself a Cowper too, and have my humours, and fancies, and purposes, and determinations, as well as others of my name, and hold them as fast as they can. *You* indeed tell *me* how often I shall see you when you come. A pretty story truly. I am an *he* Cowper, my dear, and claim the privileges that belong to my noble sex. But these matters shall be settled, as my Cousin Agamemnon used to say, at a more convenient time.

I shall rejoice to see the letter you promise me, for, though I met with a morsel of praise last week, I do not know that the week current is likely to produce me any, and having lately been pretty much pampered with that diet, I expect to find myself rather hungry by the time when your next letter shall arrive. It will therefore be very opportune. The morsel above alluded to came from—whom do you think? From ——, but she desires that her authorship may be a secret. And in my answer I promised not to divulge it, except to you. It is a pretty copy of verses, neatly written and well turned,

and when you come you shall see them. I intend to keep all pretty things to myself till then, that they may serve me as a bait to lure you hither more effectually. The last letter that I had from —— I received so many years since, that it seems as if it had reached me a good while before I was born.

I was grieved at the heart that the General could not come, and that illness was in part the cause that hindered him. I have sent him, by his express desire, a new edition of the first book, and half the second. He would not suffer me to send it to you, my dear, lest you should post it away to Maty at once. He did not give that reason, but being shrewd I found it.

The grass begins to grow, and the leaves to bud, and every thing is preparing to be beautiful against you come.

Adieu!

W. C.

P.S. You inquire of our walks, I perceive, as well as our rides. They are beautiful. You inquire also concerning a cellar. You have two cellars. Oh! what years have passed since we took the same walks, and drank out of the same bottle! but a few more weeks, and then!

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, May 8, 1786.

I did not at all doubt that your tenderness for my feelings had inclined you to suppress in your letters to me the intelligence concerning Maty's critique, that yet reached me from another quarter. When I wrote to you, I had not learned it from the General, but from my friend Bull, who only knew it by hearsay. The next post brought me the news of it from the first-mentioned, and the critique itself inclosed. Together with it came also a squib discharged against me in the "Public Advertiser." The General's letter found me in one of my most melancholy moods, and my spirits did not rise on the receipt of it. The letter indeed that he had cut from the newspaper gave me little pain, both because it contained nothing formidable, though written with malevolence enough, and because a nameless author can have no more weight with his readers than the reason which he has on his side can give him. But Maty's animadversions hurt me more. In part they appeared to me unjust, and in part ill-natured, and yet, the man himself being an oracle in every body's account, I apprehended that he had done me much mischief. Why he says that the translation is far from exact is best known to himself. For I know it to be as exact as is compatible with poetry; and prose translations of Homer are not wanted, the world has one already. But I will not fill my

letter to you with hypercriticisms, I will only add an extract from a letter of Colman's, that I received last Friday, and will then dismiss the subject. It came accompanied by a copy of the specimen which he himself had amended, and with so much taste and candour that it charmed me. He says as follows: —

"One copy I have returned, with some remarks prompted by my zeal for your success, not, Heaven knows, by arrogance or impertinence. I know no other way at once so plain, and so short of delivering my thoughts on the specimen of your translation, which on the whole, I admire exceedingly, thinking it breathes the spirit and conveys the manner of the original; though having here neither Homer, nor Pope's Homer, I cannot speak precisely of particular lines or expressions, or compare your blank verse with his rhyme, except by declaring that I think blank verse infinitely more congenial to the magnificent simplicity of Homer's hexameters, than the confined couplets and the jingle of rhyme."

His amendments are chiefly bestowed on the lines encumbered with elisions, and I will just take this opportunity to tell you, my dear, because I know you to be as much interested in what I write as myself, that some of the most offensive of those elisions were occasioned by mere criticism. I was fairly hunted into them, by vexatious objections made without end, by —— and his friend, and altered, and altered, till at last I did not care how I altered. Many thanks for ——'s verses, which

deserve just the character you give of them. They are neat and easy—but I would mumble her well, if I could get at her, for allowing herself to suppose for a moment that I praised the chancellor with a view to emolument.* I wrote those stanzas merely for my own amusement, and they slept in a dark closet years after I composed them; not in the least designed for publication. But when Johnson had printed off the longer pieces, of which the first volume principally consists, he wrote me word that he wanted yet two thousand lines to swell it to a proper size. On that occasion it was that I collected every scrap of verse that I could find, and that among the rest. None of the smaller poems had been introduced, or had been published at all with my name, but for this necessity.

Just as I wrote the last word, I was called down to Dr. Kerr, who came to pay me a voluntary visit. Were I sick, his cheerful and friendly manner would almost restore me. Air and exercise are his theme; them he recommends as the best physic for me, and in all weathers. Come, therefore, my dear, and take a little of this good physic with me, for you will find it beneficial as well as I; come and assist Mrs. Unwin in the re-establishment of your cousin's health. Air and exercise, and she and you together, will make me a perfect Samson. You will have a good house over your head, comfortable apartments, obliging neighbours, good roads, a plea-

* See the verses on Lord Thurlow, vol. i. beginning, "Round Thurlow's head in early youth," &c. &c.

ant country, and in us, your constant companions, wo who will love you, and do already love you learly, and with all our hearts. If you are in any langer of trouble, it is from myself, if any fits of lejection seize me; and, as often as they do, you will ve grieved for me; but perhaps by your assistance I shall be able to resist them better. If there is a reature under heaven, from whose co-operations with Mrs. Unwin I can reasonably expect such a blessing, that creature is yourself. I was not without such attacks when I lived in London, though, at that time, they were less oppressive, but in your company I was never unhappy a whole day in all my life.

Of how much importance is an author to himself! I return to that abominable specimen again, just to notice Maty's impatient censure of the repetition that you mention. I mean of the word *hand*. In the original there is not a repetition of it. But to repeat a word in that manner, and on such an occasion, is by no means (what he calls it) a *modern* invention. In Homer I could show him many such, and in Virgil they abound. Colman, who in his judgment of classical matters is inferior to none, says, "*I know not why Maty objects to this expression.*" I could easily change it. But, the case standing thus, I know not whether my proud stomach will condescend so low. I rather feel myself disinclined to it.

One evening last week, Mrs. Unwin and I took our walk to Weston, and, as we were returning through the grove opposite the house, the Throck-

mortons presented themselves at the door. They are owners of a house at Weston, at present empty. It is a very good one, infinitely superior to ours. When we drank chocolate with them, they both expressed their ardent desire that we would take it, wishing to have us for nearer neighbours. If you, my Cousin, were not so well provided for as you are, and at our very elbow, I verily believe I should have mustered all my rhetoric to recommend it to you. You might have it for ever without danger of ejectment, whereas your possession of the vicarage depends on the life of the vicar, who is eighty-six.* The environs are most beautiful, and the village itself one of the prettiest I ever saw. Add to this, you would step immediately into Mr. Throckmorton's pleasure-ground, where you would not soil your slipper even in winter. A most unfortunate mistake was made by that gentleman's bailiff in his absence. Just before he left Weston last year for the winter, he gave him orders to cut short the tops of the flowering shrubs, that lined a serpentine walk in a delightful grove, celebrated by my poetship in a little piece, that (you remember) was called "The Shrubbery."† The dunce, misapprehending the order, cut down and fagoted up the whole grove, leaving neither tree, bush, nor twig; nothing but stumps about as high as my ankle. Mrs. T. told us that she never saw her husband so angry in his life. I judge indeed by his physiognomy, which has great sweetness in it, that he is very little addicted to

* The Rev. Moses Brown.

† "Oh, happy shades," &c. &c., vol. i.

at infernal passion. But, had he cudgelled the an for his cruel blunder and the havoc made in nsequence of it, I could have excused him.

I felt myself really concerned for the chancellor's ness, and, from what I learned of it, both from the pers and from General Cowper, concluded that he ust die. I am accordingly delighted in the same oportion with the news of his recovery. May he ve, and live to be still the support of government! it shall be his good pleasure to render me per- nally any material service, I have no objection to . But Heaven knows that it is impossible for any ving wight to bestow less thought on that subject an myself.

May God be ever with you, my beloved Cousin!

W. C.

The mingled feelings with which we meet a long sent friend, and the alternate sensations of delight id nervous anxiety experienced as the long wished r moment approaches, are expressed with singular licity in the following letter.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, May 15, 1786.

My dearest Cousin—From this very morning I gin to date the last month of our long separation, id confidently and most comfortably hope, that fore the 15th of June shall present itself, we shall ve seen each other. Is it not so? And will it

not be one of the most extraordinary eras of my extraordinary life? A year ago, we neither corresponded nor expected to meet in this world. But this world is a scene of marvellous events, many of them more marvellous than fiction itself would dare to hazard;* and (blessed be God!) they are not all of the distressing kind. Now and then, in the course of an existence whose hue is for the most part sable, a day turns up that makes amends for many sighs and many subjects of complaint. Such a day shall I account the day of your arrival at Olney.

Wherefore is it, (canst thou tell me?) that, together with all those delightful sensations to which the sight of a long absent dear friend gives birth, there is a mixture of something painful, flutterings, and tumults, and I know not what accompaniments of our pleasure, that are in fact perfectly foreign from the occasion? Such I feel, when I think of our meeting, and such, I suppose, feel you; and the nearer the crisis approaches, the more I am sensible of them. I know, beforehand, that they will increase with every turn of the wheels that shall convey me to Newport, when I shall set out to meet you, and that, when we shall actually meet, the pleasure, and this unaccountable pain together, will be as much as I shall be able to support. I am utterly at a loss for the cause, and can only resolve it into that appointment, by which it has been foreordained that all human delights shall be qualified and mingled with their contraries. For there is nothing formidable in you. To me at least there is

* "Truth is strange, stranger than fiction."

othing such, no, not even in your menaces, unless hen you threaten me to write no more. Nay, I erily believe, did I not know you to be what you re, and had less affection for you than I have, I hould have fewer of these emotions, of which I rould have none, if I could help it. But a fig for hem all! Let us resolve to combat with and to onquer them. They are dreams. They are illusions of the judgment. Some enemy, that hates he happiness of human kind, and is ever industrious to dash it, works them in us; and their being so perfectly unreasonable as they are is a proof of t. Nothing that is such can be the work of a good agent. This I know too by experience, that, like all other illusions, they exist only by force of imagination, are indebted for their prevalence to the absence of their object, and in a few moments after its appearance cease. So then this is a settled point, and the case stands thus. You will tremble as you draw near to Newport, and so shall I. But we will both recollect that there is no reason why we should; and this recollection will at least have some little effect in our favour. We will likewise both take the comfort of what we know to be true, that the tumult will soon cease, and the pleasure long survive the pain, even as long, I trust, as we ourselves shall survive it.

What you said of Maty gives me all the consolation that you intended. We both think it highly probable that you suggest the true cause of his displeasure, when you suppose him mortified at not having had a part of the translation laid before him,

ere the specimen was published. The General was very much hurt, and calls his censures harsh and unreasonable. He likewise sent me a consolatory letter on the occasion, in which he took the kindest pains to heal the wound that (he supposed) I might have suffered. I am not naturally insensible, and the sensibilities that I had by nature have been wonderfully enhanced by a long series of shocks given to a frame of nerves that was never very athletic. I feel accordingly, whether painful or pleasant, in the extreme, am easily elevated, and easily cast down. The frown of a critic freezes my poetical powers, and discourages me to a degree that makes me ashamed of my own weakness. Yet I presently recover my confidence again. The half of what you so kindly say in your last would at any time restore my spirits, and, being said by you, is infallible. I am not ashamed to confess that, having commenced an author, I am most abundantly desirous to succeed as such. *I have (what perhaps you little suspect me of) in my nature an infinite share of ambition.* But with it I have, at the same time, as you well know, an equal share of diffidence. To this combination of opposite qualities it has been owing that, till lately, I stole through life without undertaking any thing, yet always wishing to distinguish myself. At last I ventured, ventured too in the only path that, at so late a period, was yet open to me; and am determined, if God have not determined otherwise, to work my way, through the obscurity that has been so long my portion, into notice. Every thing therefore that seems to threaten

this my favourite purpose with disappointment affects me nearly. I suppose that all ambitious minds are in the same predicament. He who seeks distinction must be sensible of disapprobation, exactly in the same proportion as he desires applause. And now, my precious Cousin, I have unfolded my heart to you in this particular, without a speck of dissimulation. Some people, and good people too, would blame me. But you will not; and they (I think) would blame without just cause. We certainly do not honour God, when we bury, or when we neglect to improve, as far as we may, whatever talent he may have bestowed on us, whether it be little or much. In natural things, as well as in spiritual, it is a never-failing truth, that to him who *hath* (that is, to him who occupies what he hath diligently and so as to increase it) more shall be given. Set me down therefore, my dear, for an industrious rhymer, so long as I shall have the ability. For in this only way is it possible for me, so far as I can see, either to honour God, or to serve man, or even to serve myself.

I rejoice to hear that Mr. Throckmorton wishes to be on a more intimate footing. I am shy, and suspect that he is not very much otherwise, and the consequence has been, that we have mutually wished an acquaintance without being able to accomplish it. Blessings on you for the hint that you dropped on the subject of the house at Weston! For the burthen of my song is—"Since we have met once again, let us never be separated, as we have been, more."

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Olney, May 20, 1786.

My dear Friend—About three weeks since I met your sister Chester* at Mr. Throckmorton's, and from her learned that you are at Blithfield,† and in health. Upon the encouragement of this information it is that I write now; I should not otherwise have known with certainty where to find you, or have been equally free from the fear of unseasonable intrusion. May God be with you, my friend, and give you a just measure of submission to his will, the most effectual of all remedies for the evils of this changing scene. I doubt not that he has granted you this blessing already, and may he still continue it!

Now I will talk a little about myself: for except myself, living in this *Terrarum angulo*, what can I have to talk about? In a scene of perfect tranquillity and the profoundest silence, I am kicking up the dust of heroic narrative and besieging Troy again. I told you that I had almost finished the translation of the Iliad, and I verily thought so. But I was never more mistaken. By the time when I had reached the end of the poem, the first book of my version was a twelvemonth old. When I

* Charles Bagot, the brother of Walter, took the name of Chester on the death of Sir Charles Bagot Chester, and lived at Chicheley, not far from Weston, the seat of Mr. Throckmorton.

† He was rector of Blithfield, Staffordshire.

came to consider it after having laid it by so long, it did not satisfy me. I set myself to mend it, and I did so: but still it appeared to me improveable, and that nothing would so effectually secure that point as to give the whole book a new translation. With the exception of very few lines I have so done, and was never in my life so convinced of the soundness of Horace's advice, to publish nothing in haste; so much advantage have I derived from doing that twice which I thought I had accomplished no-ably at once. He indeed recommends nine years' imprisonment of your verses before you send them abroad; but the ninth part of that time is, I be-ieve, as much as there is need of to open a man's eyes upon his own defects, and to secure him from the danger of premature self-approbation. Neither ought it to be forgotten, that nine years make so wide an interval between the cup and the lip, that a thousand things may fall out between. New en-gagements may occur, which may make the finish-ing of that which a poet has begun impossible. In nine years he may rise into a situation, or he may sink into one, utterly incompatible with his purpose. His constitution may break in nine years, and sick-ness may disqualify him for improving what he enterprised in the days of health. His inclination may change, and he may find some other employ-ment more agreeable, or another poet may enter upon the same work, and get the start of him. Therefore, my friend Horace, though I acknowledge your principle to be good, I must confess that I think the practice you would ground upon it car-

ried to an extreme. The rigour that I exercised upon the first book I intend to exercise upon all that follow, and have now actually advanced into the middle of the seventh, no where admitting more than one line in fifty of the first translation. You must not imagine that I had been careless and hasty in the first instance. In truth I had not; but, in rendering so excellent a poet as Homer into our language, there are so many points to be attended to, both in respect of language and numbers, that a first attempt must be fortunate indeed if it does not call loud for a second. You saw the specimen, and you saw (I am sure) one great fault in it; I mean the harshness of some of the elisions. I do not altogether take the blame of these to myself; for into some of them I was actually driven and hunted by a series of reiterated objections made by a critical friend, whose scruples and delicacies teazed me out of all my patience. But no such monsters will be found in the volume.

Your brother Chester has furnished me with Barnes's Homer, from whose notes I collect here and there some useful information, and whose fair and legible type preserves from the danger of being as blind as was my author. I saw a sister of yours at Mr. Throckmorton's, but I am not good at making myself heard across a large room, and therefore nothing passed between us. I felt however that she was my friend's sister, and much esteemed her for your sake.

Ever yours,

W. C.

P. S.—The swan is called *argutus* (I suppose) *a non arguendo*, and *canorus a non canendo*. But whether he be dumb or vocal, more poetical than the eagle or less, it is no matter. A feather of either, in token of your approbation and esteem, will never, you may rest assured, be an offence to me.

Cowper seems to have reserved for the tried friendship of Newton the disclosure of those secret sorrows which he so seldom intruded on others. The communications which he makes on these occasions are painfully affecting. The mind labours, and the language responds to the intensity of the inward emotion. Sorrow is often sublime and eloquent, because the source of eloquence is not so much to be found in the powers of the intellect as in the acute feelings of an ardent and sensitive heart. It is the heart that unlocks the intellect.

These remarks will prepare the reader for the following letter.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, May 20, 1786.

My dear Friend—Within this hour arrived three sets of your new publication,† for which we sincerely thank you. We have breakfasted since they came, and consequently, as you may suppose, have

* Private Correspondence.

† Messiah.

neither of us had yet an opportunity to make ourselves acquainted with the contents. I shall be happy (and when I say that, I mean to be understood in the fullest and most emphatical sense of the word) if my frame of mind shall be such as may permit me to study them. But Adam's approach to the tree of life, after he had sinned, was not more effectually prohibited by the flaming sword that turned every way, than mine to its great Antitype has been now almost these thirteen years, a short interval of three or four days, which passed about this time twelvemonth, alone excepted. For what reason it is that I am thus long excluded, if I am ever again to be admitted, is known to God only. I can say but this: that if he is still my Father, this paternal severity has toward me been such as that I have reason to account it unexampled. For though others have suffered desertion, yet few, I believe, for so long a time, and perhaps none a desertion accompanied with such experiences. But they have this belonging to them, that, as they are not fit for recital, being made up merely of infernal ingredients, so neither are they susceptible of it; for I know no language in which they could be expressed. They are as truly things which it is not possible for man to utter as those were which Paul heard and saw in the third heaven. If the ladder of Christian experience reaches, as I suppose it does, to the very presence of God, it has nevertheless its foot in the abyss. And if Paul stood, as no doubt he did, in that experience of his to which I have just alluded, on the topmost round of it, I have been standing, and still

stand, on the lowest, in this thirteenth year that has passed since I descended. In such a situation of mind, encompassed by the midnight of absolute despair, and a thousand times filled with unspeakable horror, I first commenced an author. Distress drove me to it, and the impossibility of subsisting without some employment still recommends it. I am not, indeed, so perfectly hopeless as I was; but I am equally in need of an occupation, being often as much, and sometimes even more, worried than ever. I cannot amuse myself as I once could, with carpenters' or with gardeners' tools, or with squirrels and guinea-pigs. At that time I was a child. But since it has pleased God, whatever else he withholds, to restore to me a man's mind, I have put away childish things. Thus far, therefore, it is plain that I have not chosen or prescribed to myself my own way, but have been providentially led to it; perhaps I might say with equal propriety, compelled and scourged into it: for certainly, could I have made my choice, or were I permitted to make it even now, those hours which I spend in poetry I would spend with God. But it is evidently his will that I should spend them as I do, because every other way of employing them he himself continues to make impossible. If, in the course of such an occupation, or by inevitable consequence of it, either my former connexions are revived or new ones occur, these things are as much a part of the dispensation as the leading points of it themselves; the effect as much as the cause. If his purposes in thus directing me are gracious, he will take care to prove them such in the

issue, and in the mean time will preserve me (for he is able to do that in one condition of life as in another) from all mistakes in conduct that might prove pernicious to myself, or give reasonable offence to others. I can say it as truly as it was ever spoken —Here I am: let him do with me as seemeth him good.

At present, however, I have no connexions at which either you, I trust, or any who love me and wish me well, have occasion to conceive alarm. Much kindness indeed I have experienced at the hands of several, some of them near relations, others not related to me at all; but I do not know that there is among them a single person from whom I am likely to catch contamination. I can say of them all with more truth than Jacob uttered when he called kid venison, "The Lord thy God brought them unto me." I could show you among them two men whose lives, though they have but little of what we call evangelical light, are ornaments to a Christian country; men who fear God more than some who even profess to love him. But I will not particularise farther on such a subject. Be they what they may, our situations are so distant, and we are likely to meet so seldom, that, were they, as they are not, persons of even exceptionable manners, their manners would have little to do with me. We correspond at present only on the subject of what passed at Troy three thousand years ago; and they are matters that, if they can do no good, will at least hurt nobody.

Your friendship for me, and the proof that I see

of it in your friendly concern for my welfare on this occasion, demanded that I should be explicit. Assure yourself that I love and honour you, as upon all accounts, so especially for the interest that you take and have ever taken in my welfare, most sincerely. I wish you all happiness in your new abode, all possible success in your ministry, and much fruit of your newly-published labours, and am, with Mrs. Unwin's love to yourself and Mrs. Newton,

Most affectionately yours,
My dear friend,
W. C.

Of all the letters, addressed by Cowper to Newton, that we have yet laid before the reader, we consider the last to be the fullest development of the afflicting and mysterious dispensation under which he laboured. These are indeed the deep waters, the sound of the terrible storm and tempest. We contemplate this state of mind with emotions of solemn awe, deep interest, and merited admiration, when we observe the spirit of patient resignation by which it is accompanied. "Here I am," exclaims Cowper, "let him do with me as seemeth him good." To acquiesce in submissive silence, under circumstances the most opposed to natural feeling, to bear an oppressive load daily, continuously, and with little hope of intermission, and amidst this pressure and anguish of the soul to have produced writings characterised by sound judgment, exalted morality, and a train of lucid and

elevated thought, is a phenomenon that must ever remain a mystery: but the poet's submission is the faith of a suffering martyr, and will finally meet with a martyr's triumphant crown.

But, after all, who does not see, in the case of Cowper, the evident marks of an aberration of mind on one particular subject, founded on the delusion of supposing himself excluded from the mercy of God, when his fear of offending him, the blameless tenor of his life, and his anxiety to render his works subservient to the amelioration of the age, prove the fallacy of the persuasion? How can a tree be corrupt which produces good fruits? How can a gracious Lord cast off those who delight in fearing and serving him? The supposition is repugnant to every just and sound view of the equity of the Divine government: God cannot act inconsistently with his own character and attributes. The Bible is the record of what He is, of his declarations to man, of his moral government, and of his dealings with his people. And what does the Bible proclaim? It tells us, "God is love;" "he delighteth in mercy;" he "does not willingly afflict the children of men;" "in all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them." "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." * His

* Isaiah lxiii. 9.

moral government and the history of his dealings towards the most eminent saints is a powerful illustration of these truths. He may indeed infuse *bitter ingredients* in the cup of his children: all of them, in due time, taste the wormwood and the gall. It is a part of the covenant; the token of his love, and essential to the trial of their faith and to their purification. But that he ever administers what Cowper here painfully calls *infernal ingredients* is impossible. These elements of evil spring not from above but from below. They may occur, as in the case of Job, by a permissive Providence, but sooner or later a divine power interposes, and vindicates his own wisdom and equity. We know from various sources of information, that Cowper fully admitted the force of this reasoning, and the justness of its application in every other possible instance, himself alone excepted. The answer to this assertion is that *the equity of God's moral dealings admits of no exception.* Men may change; they may act in opposition to their own principles, falsify their judgment, violate their most solemn engagements, and be influenced by the variation of time and circumstances. But this can never be true of the Divine nature. "I, the Lord, change not." "The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." "With him is no variableness, nor shadow of turning." "Have I *ever* been a wilderness unto Zion?"

We have indulged in this mode of reasoning, because it has been our lot to meet with some examples of this kind, and to have applied the argument with success. If the consolations of the Gospel

administered by an enlightened, tender, and judicious minister, formed a more prominent part in the treatment of cases of disordered intellect and depressed spirit, we feel persuaded that the instances of recovery would be far more numerous than they are found to be under existing circumstances—that suicides would be diminished, and the ills of life be borne with more submissive resignation. We consider the ambassador of Christ to be as essential as the medical practitioner. The afflicted father, recorded in the Gospel,* as having a lunatic son, "sore vexed," tried all means for his recovery, but without success. It is emphatically said, "*they could not cure him.*" All means failed. What followed? Jesus said, "*Bring him hither to me.*" The same command is still addressed to us, and there is still the same Lord, the same healing balm and antidote, and the same Almighty power and will to administer it. What was the final result? "*And the child was cured from that very hour,*" or, as the narrative adds in another account of the same event,† "*Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up, and he arose.*"

The miracles of Christ, recorded in the New Testament, are but so many emblems of the spiritual power and mercy employed in the deliverance of the immortal soul.

Other opportunities will occur in the course of the ensuing history to resume the consideration of this important subject.

* Matt. xvii. 14—18. † Mark ix. 27.

The strain of affectionate feeling that pervades the following letters to Lady Hesketh, is strongly characteristic of the stability of Cowper's friendships.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, May 25, 1786.

I have at length, my Cousin, found my way into my summer abode. I believe that I described it to you some time since, and will therefore now leave it undescribed. I will only say that I am writing in a band-box, situated, at least in my account, delightfully, because it has a window on one side that opens into that orchard through which, as I am sitting here, I shall see you often pass, and which therefore I already prefer to all the orchards in the world. You do well to prepare me for all possible delays, because in this life all sorts of disappointments are possible, and I shall do well, if any such delay of your journey should happen, to practise that lesson of patience which you inculcate. But it is a lesson which, even with you for my teacher, I shall be slow to learn. Being sure however that you will not procrastinate without cause, I will make myself as easy as I can about it, and hope the best. To convince you how much I am under discipline and good advice, I will lay aside a favourite measure, influenced in doing so by nothing but the good sense of your contrary opinion. I had set my heart on meeting you at Newport: in my haste to see you once again, I was willing to overlook many awkwardnesses I

could not but foresee would attend it. I put them aside so long as I only foresaw them myself, but since I find that you foresee them too, I can no longer deal so slightly with them: it is therefore determined that we meet at Olney. Much I shall feel, but I will not die if I can help it, and I beg that you will take all possible care to outlive it likewise, for I know what it is to be balked in the moment of acquisition, and should be loth to know it again.

Last Monday, in the evening, we walked to Weston, according to our usual custom. It happened, owing to a mistake of time, that we set out half an hour sooner than usual. This mistake we discovered while we were in the Wilderness: so finding that we had time before us, as they say, Mrs. Unwin proposed that we should go into the village, and take a view of the house that I had just mentioned to you. We did so, and found it such a one as in most respects would suit you well.* But Moses Brown, our vicar, who, as I told you, is in his eighty-sixth year, is not bound to die for that reason. He said himself, when he was here last summer, that he should live ten years longer, and for aught that appears so he may. In which case, for the sake of its near neighbourhood to us, the vicarage has charms for me that no other place can rival. But this, and a thousand things more, shall be talked over when you come.

We have been industriously cultivating our ac-

* The lodge at Weston to which Cowper removed in the November following.

quaintance with our Weston neighbours since I wrote last, and they on their part have been equally diligent in the same cause. I have a notion that we shall all suit well. I see much in them both that I admire. You know perhaps that they are Catholics.

It is a delightful bundle of praise, my Cousin, that you have sent me: all jasmine and lavender. Whoever the lady is, she has evidently an admirable pen and a cultivated mind. If a person reads, it is no matter in what language, and if the mind be informed, it is no matter whether that mind belongs to a man or a woman: the taste and the judgment will receive the benefit alike in both. Long before the Task was published, I made an experiment one day, being in a frolicsome mood, upon my friend:—we were walking in the garden, and conversing on a subject similar to these lines—

> The few that pray at all, pray oft' amiss,
> And, seeking grace t' improve the present good,
> Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.

I repeated them, and said to him with an air of *nonchalance*, "Do you recollect those lines? I have seen them somewhere, where are they?" He put on a considering face, and after some deliberation replied, "Oh, I will tell you where they must be—in the Night Thoughts." I was glad my trial turned out so well, and did not undeceive him. I mention this occurrence only in confirmation of the letter-writer's opinion, but at the same time I do assure you, on the faith of an honest man, that I never in my life designed an imitation of Young or of any

other writer; for mimicry is my abhorrence, at least in poetry.

Assure yourself, my dearest Cousin, that, both for your sake, since you make a point of it, and for my own, I will be as philosophically careful as possible that these fine nerves of mine shall not be beyond measure agitated when you arrive. In truth, there is much greater probability that they will be benefited, and greatly too. Joy of heart, from whatever occasion it may arise, is the best of all nervous medicines, and I should not wonder if such a turn given to my spirits should have even a lasting effect, of the most advantageous kind, upon them. You must not imagine neither that I am on the whole in any great degree subject to nervous affections; occasionally I am, and have been these many years, much liable to dejection. But, at intervals, and sometimes for an interval of weeks, no creature would suspect it; for I have not that which commonly is a symptom of such a case belonging to me: I mean extraordinary elevation in the absence of Mr. Bluedevil. When I am in the best health, my tide of animal sprightliness flows with great equality, so that I am never at any time exalted in proportion as I am sometimes depressed. My depression has a cause, and if that cause were to cease, I should be as cheerful thenceforth, and perhaps for ever, as any man need be. But, as I have often said, Mrs. Unwin shall be my expositor.

Adieu, my beloved Cousin. God grant that our friendship which, while we could see each other, never suffered a moment's interruption, and which

so long a separation has not in the least abated, may glow in us to our last hour, and be renewed in a better world, there to be perpetuated for ever.

For you must know, that I should not love you half so well, if I did not believe you would be my friend to eternity. There is not room enough for friendship to unfold itself in full bloom in such a nook of life as this. Therefore I am, and must and will be,

Yours for ever,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, May 29, 1786.

Thou dear, comfortable Cousin, whose letters, among all that I receive, have this property peculiarly their own—that I expect them without trembling, and never find any thing in them that does not give me pleasure—for which, therefore, I would take nothing in exchange that the world could give me, save and except that for which I must exchange them soon—(and happy shall I be to do so)—your own company. That indeed is delayed a little too long; to my impatience, at least, it seems so, who find the spring, backward as it is, too forward, because many of its beauties will have faded before you will have an opportunity to see them. We took our customary walk yesterday in the Wilderness at Weston, and saw, with regret, the laburnums, syringas, and guelder-roses, some of them blown, and others just upon

the point of blowing, and could not help observing—all these will be gone before Lady Hesketh comes. Still, however, there will be roses, and jasmine, and honeysuckle, and shady walks, and cool alcoves, and you will partake them with us. But I want you to have a share of every thing that is delightful here, and cannot bear that the advance of the season should steal away a single pleasure before you can come to enjoy it.

Every day I think of you, and almost all day long; I will venture to say, that even *you* were never so expected in your life. I called last week at the Quaker's, to see the furniture of your bed, the fame of which had reached me. It is, I assure you, superb, of printed cotton, and the subject classical. Every morning you will open your eyes on Phaëton kneeling to Apollo, and imploring his father to grant him the conduct of his chariot for a day. May your sleep be as sound as your bed will be sumptuous, and your nights, at least, will be well provided for.

I shall send up the sixth and seventh books of the Iliad shortly, and shall address them to you. You will forward them to the General. I long to show you my workshop, and to see you sitting on the opposite side of my table. We shall be as close packed as two wax figures in an old-fashioned picture-frame. I am writing in it now. It is the place in which I fabricate all my verse in summer time. I rose an hour sooner than usual, this morning, that I might finish my sheet before breakfast, for I must write this day to the General.

The grass under my windows is all bespangled

with dew-drops, and the birds are singing in the apple trees, among the blossoms. Never poet had a more commodious oratory, in which to invoke his muse.

I have made your heart ache too often, my poor dear Cousin, about my fits of dejection. Something has happened that has led me to the subject, or I would have mentioned them more sparingly. Do not suppose, or suspect, that I treat you with reserve; there is nothing in which I am concerned that you shall not be made acquainted with; but the tale is too long for a letter. I will only add, for your present satisfaction, that the cause is not exterior, that it is not within the reach of human aid, and that yet I have a hope myself, and Mrs. Unwin a strong persuasion, of its removal. I am indeed even now, and have been for a considerable time, sensible of a change for the better, and expect, with good reason, a comfortable lift from you. Guess, then, my beloved Cousin, with what wishes I look forward to the time of your arrival, from whose coming I promise myself not only pleasure but peace of mind, at least an additional share of it. At present it is an uncertain and transient guest with me, but the joy with which I shall see and converse with you at Olney may perhaps make it an abiding one.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, June 4 and 5, 1786.

Ah! my Cousin, you begin already to fear and

quake. What a hero am I, compared with you! I have no fears of *you*, on the contrary, am as bold as a lion. I wish that your carriage were even now at the door. You should see with how much courage I would face you. But what cause have you for fear? Am I not your Cousin, with whom you have wandered in the fields of Freemantle and at Bevis's Mount?—who used to read to you, laugh with you, till our sides have ached at any thing, or nothing? And am I in these respects at all altered? You will not find me so; but just as ready to laugh and to wander as you ever knew me. A cloud, perhaps, may come over me now and then, for a few hours, but from clouds I was never exempted. And are not you the identical Cousin with whom I have performed all these feats? the very Harriet whom I saw, for the first time, at De Grey's, in Norfolk-street?* (It was on a Sunday, when you came with my uncle and aunt† to drink tea there, and I had dined there, and was just going back to Westminster.) If these things are so, and I am sure that you cannot gainsay a syllable of them all, then this consequence follows, that I do not promise myself more pleasure from your company than I shall be sure to find. Then you are my Cousin, in whom I always delighted, and in whom I doubt not that I

* This Mr. De Grey has been already mentioned. He rose to the dignity of Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, and was finally created Lord Walsingham.

† Ashley Cowper and his wife, Lady Hesketh's father and mother.

shall delight, even to my latest hour. But this wicked coach-maker has sunk my spirits. What a miserable thing it is to depend, in any degree, for the accomplishment of a wish, and that wish so fervent, on the punctuality of a creature, who, I suppose, was never punctual in his life! Do tell him, my dear, in order to quicken him, that if he performs his promise, he shall make my coach, when I want one, and that if he performs it not, I will most assuredly employ some other man.

The Throckmortons sent us a note to invite us to dinner; we went, and a very agreeable day we had. They made no fuss with us, which I was heartily glad to see, for where I give trouble I am sure that I cannot be welcome. Themselves, and their chaplain, and we, were all the party. After dinner we had much cheerful and pleasant talk, the particulars of which might not perhaps be so entertaining upon paper, therefore, all but one, I will omit, and that I will mention only because it will of itself be sufficient to give you an insight into their opinion on a very important subject—their own religion. I happened to say that in all professions and trades mankind affected an air of mystery. Physicians, I observed, in particular, were objects of that remark, who persist in prescribing in Latin, many times, no doubt, to the hazard of a patient's life through the ignorance of an apothecary. Mr. Throckmorton assented to what I said, and, turning to his chaplain, to my infinite surprise observed to him, "*That is just as absurd as our praying in Latin.*" I could have hugged him for his liberality and freedom from

bigotry, but thought it rather more decent to let the matter pass without any visible notice. I therefore heard it with pleasure, and kept my pleasure to myself. The two ladies in the mean time were tête-à-tête in the drawing-room. Their conversation turned principally (as I afterwards learned from Mrs. Unwin) on a most delightful topic, viz. myself. In the first place, Mrs. Throckmorton admired my book, from which she quoted by heart more than I could repeat, though I so lately wrote it. In short, my dear, I cannot proceed to relate what she said of the book and the book's author, for that abominable modesty that I cannot even yet get rid of. Let it suffice to say, that you, who are disposed to love every body who speaks kindly of your cousin, will certainly love Mrs. Throckmorton, when you shall be told what she said of him, and that you *will* be told is equally certain, because it depends on Mrs. Unwin. It is a very convenient thing to have a Mrs. Unwin, who will tell you many a good long story for me, that I am not able to tell for myself. I am however not at all in arrears to our neighbours in the matter of admiration and esteem, but the more I know the more I like them, and have nearly an affection for them both. I am delighted that "The Task" has so large a share of the approbation of your sensible Suffolk friend.

I received yesterday from the General another letter of T. S. An unknown auxiliary having started up in my behalf, I believe I shall leave the business of answering to him, having no leisure myself for controversy. He lies very open to a very effectual reply.

My dearest Cousin, adieu! I hope to write to you but once more before we meet. But oh! this coach-maker! and oh! this holiday week!

Yours, with impatient desire to see you,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, June 9, 1786.

My dear Friend—The little time that I can devote to any other purpose than that of poetry, is, as you may suppose, stolen. Homer is urgent. Much is done, but much remains undone, and no schoolboy is more attentive to the performance of his daily task than I am. You will therefore excuse me, if, at present, I am both unfrequent and short.

The paper tells me that the Chancellor has relapsed, and I am truly sorry to hear it. The first attack was dangerous, but a second must be more formidable still. It is not probable that I should ever hear from him again if he survive; yet of the much that I should have felt for him, had our connexion never been interrupted, I still feel much. Every body will feel the loss of a man, whose abilities have made him of such general importance.

I correspond again with Colman, and upon the most friendly footing, and find in his instance, and in some others, that an intimate intercourse, which has been only casually suspended, not forfeited on either side by outrage, is capable not only of revival but improvement.

I had a letter some time since from your sister Fanny, that gave me great pleasure. Such notices from old friends are always pleasant, and of such pleasures I have received many lately. They refresh the remembrance of early days, and make me young again. The noble institution of the Nonsense Club will be forgotten when we are gone who composed it, but I often think of your most heroic line, written at one of our meetings, and especially think of it when I am translating Homer,

"To whom replied the Devil yard-long-tail'd."

There never was any thing more truly Grecian than that triple epithet, and, were it possible to introduce it into either Iliad or Odyssey, I should certainly steal it. I am now flushed with expectation of Lady Hesketh, who spends the summer with us. We hope to see her next week. We have found admirable lodgings both for her and her suite, and a Quaker in this town, still more admirable than they, who, as if he loved her as much as I do, furnishes them for her with real elegance.

W. C.

The period so long and so fervently expected at length approached. Lady Hesketh arrived at Olney in the middle of June, 1786. These two relatives and friends met together, after a separation of twenty-three years, anxious to testify to each other that time, "that great innovator," had left inviolate the claims of a friendship, which absence could not *impair*, because it was founded on esteem, and

strengthened by the most endearing recollections. It does not always happen, when the mind has indulged in the anticipation of promised joy, that the result corresponds with the expectation. But, in the present case, the cherished hope was amply realized, though its first emotions were trying to the sensitive frame of Cowper. He was truly delighted in welcoming his endeared relative; and, as his own house was inadequate for her reception, Lady Hesketh was comfortably lodged in the vicarage of Olney; a situation so near to his own residence, and so eligible from the private communication between their two houses, as to admit of all the facilities of frequent intercourse and union.

The influence of this event proved beneficial to the health and spirits of Cowper. The highly cultivated mind of Lady Hesketh, the charm of her manners, and her endearing qualities, called forth the development of kindred feelings in his own character. As she was furnished with a carriage and horses, he was gradually induced to avail himself of this opportunity of exploring the neighbourhood, and of multiplying his innocent enjoyments. His life had been so retired at Olney, that he had not even extended his excursions to the neighbouring town of Newport-Pagnell in the course of many years; but the convenience of a carriage led him, in August, to visit Mr. Bull, who resided there—the friend from whose assiduous attention he derived so much benefit in a season of mental depression. It was at his suggestion, as we have already stated, that Cowper engaged in the transla-

tion of Madame Guion's Poems. As it is some time since we have had occasion to refer to this justly esteemed character, we think the following short letter, addressed to him by Cowper, will exhibit an amusing portrait of his character and habits.

"Mon aimable and très cher Ami—It is not in the power of chaises, or chariots, to carry you where my affections will not follow you; if I heard that you were gone to finish your days in the moon, I should not love you the less; but should contemplate the place of your abode, as often as it appeared in the heavens, and say—Farewell, my friend, for ever! Lost! but not forgotten! Live happy in thy lantern, and smoke the remainder of thy pipes in peace! Thou art rid of earth, at least of all its cares, and so far can I rejoice in thy removal; and as to the cares that are to be found in the moon, I am resolved to suppose them lighter than those below—heavier they can hardly be."

We also add the following beautiful description of a thunder-storm, in a letter to the same person, expressed with the feelings of a poet, that knew how to embody the sublime in language of corresponding grandeur.

"I was always an admirer of thunder-storms, even before I knew whose voice I heard in them; but especially an admirer of thunder rolling over the great waters. There is something singularly majestic in the sound of it at sea, where the eye

and the ear have uninterrupted opportunity of observation, and the concavity above being made spacious reflects it with more advantage. I have consequently envied you your situation, and the enjoyment of those refreshing breezes that belong to it. We have indeed been regaled with some of these bursts of ethereal music. The peals have been as loud, by the report of a gentleman who lived many years in the West Indies, as were ever heard in those islands, and the flashes as splendid. But when the thunder preaches, an horizon bounded by the ocean is the only sounding-board." *

The visit of Lady Hesketh to Olney led to a very favourable change in the residence of Cowper. He had now passed nineteen years in a scene that was far from being adapted to his taste and feelings. The house which he inhabited looked on a market-place, and once, in a season of illness, he was so

* There are few countries where a thunder-storm presents so sublime, and terrific a spectacle, as in Switzerland. The writer remembers once witnessing a scene of this kind in the Castle of Chillon, on the banks of the Lake of Geneva. The whole atmosphere seemed to be overcharged with the electric fluid. A stillness, like that of death, prevailed, forming a striking contrast with the tumult of the elements that shortly succeeded. The lightning at length burst forth, in vivid coruscations, like a flame of fire, darting upon the agitated waters; while the rain descended in torrents. Peals of thunder followed, rolling over the wide expanse of the lake, and re-echoing along the whole range of the Alps to the left; and then taking a complete circuit, finally passed over to the Jura, on the opposite side, impressing the mind with indescribable awe and admiration.

apprehensive of being incommoded by the bustle of a fair, that he requested to lodge for a single night under the roof of his friend Mr. Newton, where he was induced, by the more comfortable situation of the vicarage, to remain fourteen months. His intimacy with this excellent and highly esteemed character was so great that Mr. Newton has described it in the following remarkable terms, in memoirs of the poet, which affection induced him to begin, but which the troubles and infirmities of very advanced life obliged him to relinquish.

" For nearly twelve years we were seldom separated for seven hours at a time, when we were awake, and at home: the first six I passed in daily admiring, and aiming to imitate him: during the second six, I walked pensively with him in the valley of the shadow of death."

Mr. Newton also bears the following honourable testimony to the pious and benevolent habits of Cowper. " He loved the poor. He often visited them in their cottages, conversed with them in the most condescending manner, sympathized with them, counselled and comforted them in their distresses; and those who were seriously disposed were often cheered and animated by his prayers!" These are pleasing memorials, for we believe that the cottages of the poor will ever be found to be the best school for the improvement of the heart. After the removal of Mr. Newton to London and the departure of Lady Austen, Olney had no particular attractions for Cowper; and Lady Hesketh was happy in promoting the project, which had occurred

o him, of removing with Mrs. Unwin to the near nd picturesque village of Weston—a scene highly avourable to his health and amusement. For, with t very comfortable house, it afforded him a garden, nd a field of considerable extent, which he delighted to cultivate and embellish. With these he had advantages still more desirable—easy, and constant access to the spacious and tranquil pleasure-grounds of his accomplished and benevolent landlord, Mr. Throckmorton, whose neighbouring house supplied him with an intercourse peculiarly suited to his gentle and delicate spirit.

Cowper removed from Olney to Weston in November 1786. The course of his life, in his new situation, (the scene so happily embellished by his Muse,) will be best described by the subsequent series of his letters to that amiable relative, to whom he considered himself chiefly indebted for this improvement in his domestic scenery and comforts. With these will be connected a selection of his letters to other friends, and particularly the letters addressed to one of his most intimate correspondents, Samuel Rose, Esq., who commenced his acquaintance in the beginning of the year 1787. Another endeared character will also be introduced to the notice of the reader, whose affectionate and unremitting attention to the poet, when he most needed these kind and tender offices, will ever give him a just title to the gratitude and love of the admirers of Cowper: we allude to the late Rev. Dr. Johnson.

We now resume the correspondence.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, June 19, 1786.

My dear Cousin's arrival has, as it could not fail to do, made us happier than we ever were at Olney. Her great kindness in giving us her company is a cordial that I shall feel the effect of not only while she is here, but while I live.

Olney will not be much longer the place of our habitation. At a village two miles distant we have hired a house of Mr. Throckmorton, a much better than we occupy at present, and yet not more expensive. It is situated very near to our most agreeable landlord and his agreeable pleasure-grounds. In him, and in his wife, we shall find such companions as will always make the time pass pleasantly while they are in the country, and his grounds will afford us good air and good walking room in the winter; two advantages which we have not enjoyed at Olney, where I have no neighbour with whom I can converse, and where, seven months in the year, I have been imprisoned by dirty and impassable ways, till both my health and Mrs. Unwin's have suffered materially.

Homer is ever importunate, and will not suffer me to spend half the time with my distant friends that I would gladly give them.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, June 22, 1786.

dear Friend—I am not glad that I am obliged
logise for an interval of three weeks that have
d since the receipt of yours; but, not having it
power to write oftener than I do, I am glad
ny reason is such a one as you admit. In
my time is very much occupied; and the
because I not only have a long and laborious
in hand, for such it would prove at any rate,
ecause I make it a point to bestow my utmost
ion upon it, and to give it all the finishing that
ost scrupulous accuracy can command. As
as breakfast is over, I retire to my nutshell of
mer-house, which is my verse-manufactory,
ere I abide seldom less than three hours, and
ften more. In the afternoon I return to it
; and all the daylight that follows, except
is devoted to a walk, is given to Homer. It
l for me that a course which is now become
sary is so much my choice. The regularity of
ed has been, in the course of this last week,
e interrupted by the arrival of my dear Cousin,
Hesketh; but with the new week I shall, as
ay, turn over a new leaf, and put myself under
me rigorous discipline as before. Something,
ot a little, is due to the feelings that the sight
e kindest relation that ever man was blessed

* Private Correspondence.

with must needs give birth to, after so long a separation. But she, whose anxiety for my success is I believe even greater than my own, will take care that I shall not play truant and neglect my proper business. It was an observation of a sensible man, whom I knew well in ancient days, (I mean when I was very young,) that people are never in reality happy when they boast much of being so. I feel myself accordingly well content to say, without any enlargement on the subject, that an inquirer after happiness might travel far, and not find a happier trio than meet every day either in our parlour, or in the parlour at the vicarage. I will not say that mine is not occasionally somewhat dashed with the sable hue of those notions concerning myself and my situation, that have occupied, or rather possessed, me so long: but, on the other hand, I can also affirm that my Cousin's affectionate behaviour to us both, the sweetness of her temper, and the sprightliness of her conversation, relieve me in no small degree from the presence of them.

Mrs. Unwin is greatly pleased with your Sermons; and has told me so repeatedly; and the pleasure that they have given her awaits me also in due time, as I am well and confidently assured: both because the subject of them is the greatest and the most interesting that can fall under the pen of any writer, and because no writer can be better qualified to discuss it judiciously and feelingly than yourself. The third set with which you favoured us we destined to Lady Hesketh; and, in so disposing of them, are inclined to believe that we shall not err

far from the mark at which you yourself directed them.

Our affectionate remembrances attend yourself and Mrs. Newton, to which you acquired an everlasting right while you dwelt under the roof where we dined yesterday. It is impossible that we should set our foot over the threshold of the vicarage without recollecting all your kindness.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, July 3, 1786.

My dear William—After a long silence I begin again. A day given to my friends is a day taken from Homer, but to such an interruption now and then occurring I have no objection. Lady Hesketh is, as you observe, arrived, and has been with us near a fortnight. She pleases every body, and is pleased, in her turn, with every thing she finds at Olney, is always cheerful and sweet-tempered, and knows no pleasure equal to that of communicating pleasure to us and to all around her. This disposition in her is the more comfortable, because it is not the humour of the day, a sudden flash of benevolence and good spirits occasioned merely by a change of scene, but it is her natural turn, and has governed all her conduct ever since I knew her first. We are consequently happy in her society, and shall be happier still to have you partake with

us in our joy. I am fond of the sound of bells, but was never more pleased with those of Olney than when they rang her into her new habitation. It is a compliment that our performers upon those instruments have never paid to any other personage (Lord Dartmouth excepted) since we knew the town. In short, she is, as she ever was, my pride and my joy, and I am delighted with every thing that means to do her honour. Her first appearance was too much for me; my spirits, instead of being gently raised, as I had inadvertently supposed they would be, broke down with me under the pressure of too much joy, and left me flat, or rather melancholy, throughout the day, to a degree that was mortifying to myself and alarming to her. But I have made amends for this failure since, and in point of cheerfulness have far exceeded her expectations, for she knew that sable had been my suit for many years.

And now I shall communicate news that will give you pleasure. When you first contemplated the front of our abode, you were shocked. In your eyes it had the appearance of a prison, and you sighed at the thought that your mother lived in it. Your view of it was not only just, but prophetic. It had not only the aspect of a place built for the purposes of incarceration, but has actually served that purpose through a long, long period, and we have been the prisoners. But a jail-delivery is at hand. The bolts and bars are to be loosed, and we shall escape. A very different mansion, both in point of appearance and accommodation, expects us,

and the expense of living in it not greater than we are subjected to in this. It is situated at Weston, one of the prettiest villages in England, and belongs to Mr. Throckmorton. We all three dine with him to-day by invitation, and shall survey it in the afternoon, point out the necessary repairs, and finally adjust the treaty. I have my Cousin's promise that she will never let another year pass without a visit to us, and the house is large enough to take us and our suite, and her also, with as many of hers as she shall choose to bring. The change will, I hope, prove advantageous both to your mother and me in all respects. Here we have no neighbourhood, there we shall have most agreeable neighbours in the Throckmortons. Here we have a bad air in winter, impregnated with the fishy-smelling fumes of the marsh miasma; there we shall breathe in an atmosphere untainted. Here we are confined from September to March, and sometimes longer; there we shall be upon the very verge of pleasure-grounds in which we can always ramble, and shall not wade through almost impassable dirt to get at them. Both your mother's constitution and mine have suffered materially by such close and long confinement, and it is high time, unless we intend to retreat into the grave, that we should seek out a more wholesome residence. So far is well, the rest is left to Heaven.

I have hardly left myself room for an answer to your queries concerning my friend John and his studies. I should recommend the Civil War of Cæsar, because he wrote it, who ranks, I believe, as the best

writer, as well as soldier, of his day. There are books (I know not what they are, but you do, and can easily find them) that will inform him clearly of both the civil and military management of the Romans, the several officers, I mean, in both departments, and what was the peculiar province of each. The study of some such book would, I should think, prove a good introduction to that of Livy, unless you have a Livy with notes to that effect. A want of intelligence in those points has heretofore made the Roman history very dark and difficult to me; therefore I thus advise.

Yours ever,

W. C.

The following letter contains some particulars relative to his version of Homer.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Olney, July 4, 1786.

I rejoice, my dear friend, that you have at last received my proposals, and most cordially thank you for all your labours in my service. I have friends in the world, who, knowing that I am apt to be careless when left to myself, are determined to watch over me with a jealous eye upon this occasion. The consequence will be, that the work will be better executed, but more tardy in the production To them I owe it, that my translation, as fast as it proceeds, passes under the revisal of a most

accurate discerner of all blemishes. I know not whether I told you before, or now tell you for the first time, that I am in the hands of a very extraordinary person. He is intimate with my bookseller, and voluntarily offered his service. I was at first doubtful whether to accept it or not, but, finding that my friends abovesaid were not to be satisfied on any other terms, though myself a perfect stranger to the man and his qualifications, except as he was recommended by Johnson, I at length consented, and have since found great reason to rejoice that I did. I called him an extraordinary person, and such he is. For he is not only versed in Homer, and accurate in his knowledge of the Greek to a degree that entitles him to that appellation, but, though a foreigner, is a perfect master of our language, and has exquisite taste in English poetry. By his assistance I have improved many passages, supplied many oversights, and corrected many mistakes, such as will of course escape the most diligent and attentive labourer in such a work. I ought to add, because it affords the best assurance of his zeal and fidelity, that he does not toil for hire, nor will accept of any premium, but has entered on this business merely for his amusement. In the last instance, my sheets will pass through the hands of our old schoolfellow Colman, who has engaged to correct the press, and make any little alterations that he may see expedient. With all his precaution, little as I intended it once, I am now well satisfied. Experience has convinced me that other eyes than my own are necessary, in order

that so long and arduous a task may be finished as it ought, and may neither discredit me nor mortify and disappoint my friends. You, who, I know, interest yourself much and deeply in my success, will, I dare say, be satisfied with it too. Pope had many aids, and he who follows Pope ought not to walk alone.

Though I announce myself by my very undertaking to be one of Homer's most enraptured admirers, I am not a blind one. Perhaps the speech of Achilles, given in my specimen, is, as you hint, rather too much in the moralizing strain to suit so young a man and of so much fire. But, whether it be or not, in the course of the close application that I am forced to give my author I discover inadvertences not a few; some perhaps that have escaped even the commentators themselves, or perhaps, in the enthusiasm of their idolatry, they resolved that they should pass for beauties. Homer, however, say what they will, was man; and, in all the works of man, especially in a work of such length and variety, many things will of necessity occur that might have been better. Pope and Addison had a Dennis, and Dennis, if I mistake not, held up as he has been to scorn and detestation, was a sensible fellow, and passed some censures upon both those writers, that, had they been less just, would have hurt them less. Homer had his Zoilus, and perhaps, if we knew all that Zoilus said, we should be forced to acknowledge that, sometimes at least, he had reason on his side. But it is dangerous to find any fault at all with what the world is determined to esteem faultless.

I rejoice, my dear friend, that you enjoy some composure and cheerfulness of spirits; may God preserve and increase to you so great a blessing!

I am affectionately and truly yours,

W. C.

Cowper again resumes the subject of his painful dispensation, in the following letter to Newton.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Aug. 5, 1786.

My dear Friend—You have heard of our intended removal. The house that is to receive us is in a state of preparation, and, when finished, will be both smarter and more commodious than our present abode. But the circumstance that recommends it chiefly is its situation. Long confinement in the winter, and indeed for the most part in the autumn too, has hurt us both. A gravel-walk, thirty yards long, affords but indifferent scope to the locomotive faculty: yet it is all that we have had to move in for eight months in the year, during thirteen years that I have been a prisoner. Had I been confined in the Tower, the battlements of it would have furnished me with a larger space. You say well, that there was a time when I was happy at Olney; and I am now as happy at Olney as I expect to be any where without the presence of God. Change of situation is with me no otherwise an object than

* Private Correspondence.

as both Mrs. Unwin's health and mine may happen to be concerned in it. A fever of the slow and spirit-oppressing kind seems to belong to all, except the natives, who have dwelt in Olney many years; and the natives have putrid fevers. Both they and we, I believe, are immediately indebted for our respective maladies to an atmosphere encumbered with raw vapours issuing from flooded meadows; and we in particular, perhaps, have fared the worse for sitting so often, and sometimes for months, over a cellar filled with water. These ills we shall escape in the uplands, and, as we may reasonably hope, of course, their consequences. But, as for happiness, he that has once had communion with his Maker must be more frantic than ever I was yet if he can dream of finding it at a distance from Him. I no more expect happiness at Weston than here, or than I should expect it in company with felons and outlaws in the hold of a ballast-lighter. Animal spirits, however, have their value, and are especially desirable to him who is condemned to carry a burthen, which at any rate will tire him, but which, without their aid cannot fail to crush him. The dealings of God with me are to myself utterly unintelligible. I have never met, either in books or in conversation, with an experience at all similar to my own. More than a twelvemonth has passed since I began to hope that, having walked the whole breadth of the bottom of this Red Sea, I was beginning to climb the opposite shore, and I prepared to sing the song of Moses. But I have been disappointed: those hopes have

been blasted; those comforts have been wrested from me. I could not be so duped, even by the arch-enemy himself, as to be made to question the divine nature of them; but I have been made to believe (which, you will say, is being duped still more) that God gave them to me in derision and took them away in vengeance. Such however is and has been my persuasion many a long day, and when I shall think on that subject more comfortably, or, as you will be inclined to tell me, more rationally and scripturally, I know not. In the mean time, I embrace with alacrity every alleviation of my case, and with the more alacrity, because whatsoever proves a relief of my distress is a cordial to Mrs. Unwin, whose sympathy with me, through the whole of it, has been such that, despair excepted, her burthen has been as heavy as mine. Lady Hesketh, by her affectionate behaviour, the cheerfulness of her conversation, and the constant sweetness of her temper, has cheered us both, and Mrs. Unwin not less than me. By her help we get change of air and of scene, though still resident at Olney, and by her means have intercourse with some families in this country with whom, but for her, we could never have been acquainted. Her presence here would, at any time, even in my happiest days, have been a comfort to me, but in the present day I am doubly sensible of its value. She leaves nothing unsaid, nothing undone, that she thinks will be conducive to our well-being; and, so far as she is concerned, I have nothing to wish but that I could be-

lieve her sent hither in mercy to myself,—then I should be thankful.

I am, my dear friend, with Mrs. Unwin's love to Mrs. N. and yourself, hers and yours, as ever,

W. C.

Having so recently considered the peculiar circumstances of Cowper's depression, we shall not further advert to it than to state, on the authority of John Higgins, Esq., of Turvey, who at that time enjoyed frequent opportunities of observing his manner and habits, that there was no perceptible appearance of his labouring under so oppressive a malady. On the contrary, his spirits, as far as outward appearances testified, were remarkably cheerful, and sometimes even gay and sportive. In a letter to Mrs. King, which will subsequently appear, will be found a remark to the same effect.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, August 24, 1786.

My dear Friend—I catch a minute by the tail and hold it fast while I write to you. The moment it is fled I must go to breakfast. I am still occupied in refining and polishing, and shall this morning give the finishing hand to the seventh book. F—— does me the honour to say that the most difficult and most interesting parts of the poem are admirably rendered. But, because he did not express himself equally pleased with the more pedestrian

parts of it, my labour therefore has been principally given to the dignification of them; not but that I have retouched considerably, and made better still the best. In short, I hope to make it all of a piece, and shall exert myself to the utmost to secure that desirable point. A story-teller, so very circumstantial as Homer, must of necessity present us often with much matter in itself capable of no other embellishment than purity of diction and harmony of versification can give to it. *Hic labor, hoc opus est.* For our language, unless it be very severely chastised, has not the terseness, nor our measure the music of the Greek. But I shall not fail through want of industry.

We are likely to be very happy in our connexion with the Throckmortons. His reserve and mine wear off; and he talks with great pleasure of the comfort that he proposes to himself from our winter evening conversations. His purpose seems to be that we should spend them alternately with each other. Lady Hesketh transcribes for me at present. When she is gone, Mrs. Throckmorton takes up that business, and will be my lady of the ink-bottle for the rest of the winter. She solicited herself that office.

Believe me,
My dear William, truly yours,
W. C.

Mr. Throckmorton will (I doubt not) procure Lord Petre's name, if he can, without any hint from me. He could not interest himself more in my suc-

cess than he seems to do. Could he get the Pope to subscribe, I should have him, and should be glad of him and the whole conclave.

The following letters are without a date; nor do we know to what period they refer. We insert them in the order in which we find them.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

My dear Friend—You are my mahogany box, with a slip in the lid of it, to which I commit my productions of the lyric kind, in perfect confidence that they are safe, and will go no farther. All who are attached to the jingling art have this peculiarity, that they would find no pleasure in the exercise, had they not one friend at least to whom they might publish what they have composed. If you approve my Latin, and your wife and sister my English, this, together with the approbation of your mother, is fame enough for me.

He who cannot look forward with comfort must find what comfort he can in looking backward. Upon this principle I the other day sent my imagination upon a trip thirty years behind me. She was very obedient and very swift of foot, presently performed her journey, and at last set me down in the sixth form at Westminster. I fancied myself once more a school-boy, a period of life in which, if I had never tasted true happiness, I was at least equally

ıainted with its contrary. No manufacturer
ding dreams ever succeeded better in his em-
ent than I do. I can weave such a piece of
·y, in a few minutes, as not only has all the
s of reality, but is embellished also with a va-
f beauties, which, though they never existed,
ıre captivating than any that ever did:—ac-
gly, I was a school-boy, in high favour with
ster, received a silver groat for my exercise,
d the pleasure of seeing it sent from form to
or the admiration of all who were able to un-
ıd it. Do you wish to see this highly ap-
d performance? It follows on the other side.

[*Torn off.*] *

way of compensation, we subjoin some verses,
sed to a young lady, at the request of Mr.
, to whom he thus writes:—
have endeavoured to comply with your re-
though I am not good at writing upon a given
. Your mother however comforts me by her
ation, and I steer myself in all that I produce
judgment. If she does not understand me
first reading, I am sure the lines are obscure
ways alter them; if she laughs, I know it is
hout reason; and if she says, "That's well,
do," I have no fear lest any body else should
ılt with it. She is my lord chamberlain, who
s all I write.

* jeu d'esprit has never been found, notwithstanding diligent inquiry.

TO MISS C——, ON HER BIRTH-DAY

How many between east and west
Disgrace their parent earth,
Whose deeds constrain us to detest
The day that gave them birth!

Not so when Stella's natal morn
Revolving months restore,
We can rejoice that she was born,
And wish her born once more!

If you like it, use it: if not, you know the remedy. It is serious, yet epigrammatic—like a bishop at a ball!

W. C.

It is remarkable, that the laudable efforts which are now making to enforce the better observance of the Lord's day, to diminish the temptations to perjury by the unnecessary multiplication of oaths, and to arrest the progress of the vice of drunkenness, appear from the following letter to have been anticipated nearly fifty years since, by the Rev. William Unwin. Deeply impressed with a sense of the extent and enormity of these national sins, his conscientious mind (always seeking opportunities for doing good) led him to urge the employment of Cowper's pen in the correction of these evils. What he suggested, as we believe, was as follows, viz. to draw up a memorial or representation on this subject to the bench of bishops, as the constituted guardians of public morals, and thus to call forth their united exertions; secondly, to awaken the public mind to the magnitude of these crimes, and, finally, to

obtain some legislative enactment for their prevention.

We now insert Cowper's reply to the proposition of his friend Mr. Unwin.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

My dear Friend—I am sensibly mortified at finding myself obliged to disappoint you; but, though I have had many thoughts upon the subjects you propose to my consideration, I have had none that have been favourable to the undertaking. I applaud your purpose, for the sake of the principle from which it springs, but I look upon the evils you mean to animadvert upon as too obstinate and inveterate ever to be expelled by the means you mention. The very persons to whom you would address your remonstrance are themselves sufficiently aware of their enormity; years ago, to my knowledge, they were frequently the topics of conversations at polite tables; they have been frequently mentioned in both houses of parliament; and, I suppose, there is hardly a member of either who would not immediately assent to the necessity of a reformation, were it proposed to him in a reasonable way. But there it stops; and there it will for ever stop, till the majority are animated with a zeal in which they are at present deplorably defective. A religious man is unfeignedly shocked when he reflects upon the prevalence of such crimes; a moral man must needs be so in a degree, and will affect to be much more so than he is. But how

many do you suppose there are among our worthy representatives that come under either of these descriptions? If all were such, yet to new model the police of the country, which must be done in order to make even unavoidable perjury less frequent, were a task they would hardly undertake, on account of the great difficulty that would attend it. Government is too much interested in the consumption of malt liquor to reduce the number of venders. Such plausible pleas may be offered in defence of travelling on Sundays, especially by the trading part of the world, as the whole bench of bishops would find it difficult to overrule. And with respect to the violation of oaths, till a certain name is more generally respected than it is at present, however such persons as yourself may be grieved at it, the legislature are never likely to lay it to heart. I do not mean, nor would by any means attempt, to discourage you in so laudable an enterprise, but such is the light in which it appears to me, that I do not feel the least spark of courage qualifying or prompting me to embark in it myself. An exhortation therefore written by me, by hopeless, desponding me, would be flat, insipid, and uninteresting; and disgrace the cause instead of serving it. If, after what I have said, however, you still retain the same sentiments, *Macte esto virtute tuâ*, there is nobody better qualified than yourself, and may your success prove that I despaired of it without a reason.

Adieu,

My dear friend,

W. C.

Cowper, it seems, declined his friend's proposal, and was by no means sanguine in his hopes of a remedy. The reasons he assigns are sufficient to deter the generality of mankind. Still there are men always raised up by the providence of God, in his own appointed time, endowed from above with qualifications necessary for great enterprises, with minds to conceive and hands to execute, distinguished by a perseverance that no toil can weary, and no opposition can divert from its purpose, because they are inwardly supported by the integrity of their motives and a deep conviction of the importance of their object; and because they see through the vista of time, however comparatively distant, and through those besetting difficulties which obstruct the progress of all good undertakings, the final accomplishment of all their labours.

Let no man despair of success in a righteous cause. Let him well conceive his plan and mature it: let him gain all the aid that can be derived from the counsel of wise and reflecting minds; and, above all, let him implore the illuminating influences of that Holy Spirit, which can alone impart what all want, "the wisdom that is from above," which is "pure, peaceable, gentle, and full of good fruits;" let him be simple in his view, holy in his purpose, zealous, prudent, and persevering in its pursuit; and we feel no hesitation in saying, *that man will be* "*blessed* in his deed." There are no difficulties, if his object be practicable, and the means be within his command, that he may not hope to conquer; no

corrupt passions of men over which he may not finally triumph, because there is a Divine Power that can level the highest mountains and exalt the lowest valleys, and because it is recorded for our consolation and instruction: "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." *

With respect to the more immediate subject of Cowper's letter, so far as it is applicable to modern times, we must confess that we are sanguine in our hopes of improvement, founded on the increasing moral feeling of the times, and the Divine agency, now so visibly interposing in the affairs of men. Every abuse will progressively receive its appropriate and counteracting remedy. The Lord's day will be rescued from gross profanation. The revenue opposes the great difficulty, in diminishing the crime of drunkenness; and the Excise claims the respect and homage due to the cause of temperance. How just and forcible is the following portrait drawn by the Muse of Cowper!

> "The Excise is fattened with the rich result
> Of all this riot; and ten thousand casks,
> For ever dribbling out their base contents,
> Touched by the Midas finger of the state,
> Bleed gold for ministers to sport away.

* Exodus, xiii. 21, 22.

Drink, and be mad then; 'tis your country bids!
Gloriously drunk obey the important call!
Her cause demands the assistance of your throats;
Ye all can swallow, and she asks no more."

The Task, Book iv.

We know not to what event the following letter refers, as it is without any date to guide us. It may probably relate to the period of Lord George Gordon's riots. We insert it as we find it.*

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Though we live in a nook, and the world is quite unconscious that there are any such beings in it as ourselves, yet we are not unconcerned about what passes in it. The present awful crisis, big with the fate of England, engages much of our attention. The action is probably over by this time, and though we know it not, the grand question is decided, whether the war shall roar in our once peaceful fields, or whether we shall still only hear of it at a distance. I can compare the nation to no similitude more apt, than that of an ancient castle, that had been for days assaulted by the battering ram. It was long before the stroke of that engine made any sensible impression, but the continual repetition

* Men who are of sufficient celebrity to entitle their letters to the honour of future publication would do well in never omitting to attach a date to them. The neglect of this precaution, on the part of the Rev. Legh Richmond, led to much perplexity.

at length communicated a slight tremor to the wall, the next, and the next, and the next blow increased it. Another shock puts the whole mass in motion, from the top to the foundation; it bends forward, and is every moment driven farther from the perpendicular; till at last the decisive blow is given, and down it comes. Every million that has been raised within the last century, has had an effect upon the constitution like that of a blow from the aforesaid ram upon the aforesaid wall. The impulse becomes more and more important, and the impression it makes is continually augmented; unless therefore something extraordinary intervenes to prevent it—you will find the consequence at the end of my simile.

Yours,

W. C.

The letter which we next insert, is curious and interesting, as it contains a critique on the works of Churchill, whose style Cowper's is supposed to resemble, in its nervous strength and pungency. He calls him "the great Churchill." One of his productions, not here mentioned, was entitled the Rosciad, containing strictures on the theatrical performers of that day, who trembled at his censures, or were elated by his praise. He has passed along the stream, and has ceased to be read, though once a popular writer. It is much to be lamented that his habits were irregular, his domestic duties violated, and his life at length shortened by intempe-

rance. The reader may form an estimate of his poetical pretensions from the judgment here passed upon them by Cowper.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

My dear William—How apt we are to deceive ourselves where self is in question! You say I am in your debt, and I accounted you in mine: a mistake to which you must attribute my arrears, if indeed I owe you any, for I am not backward to write where the uppermost thought is welcome.

I am obliged to you for all the books you have occasionally furnished me with: I did not indeed read many of Johnson's Classics—those of established reputation are so fresh in my memory, though many years have intervened since I made them my companions, that it was like reading what I read yesterday over again; and, as to the minor Classics, I did not think them worth reading at; all I tasted most of them, and did not like them: it is a great thing to be indeed a poet, and does not happen to more than one man in a century. Churchill, the great Churchill, deserved the name of poet—I have read him twice, and some of his pieces three times over, and the last time with more pleasure than the first. The pitiful scribbler of his life seems to have undertaken that task, for which he was entirely unqualified, merely because it afforded him an opportunity to traduce him. He has inserted in it but one anecdote of consequence, for which he refers you to a novel, and introduces the story, with doubts

about the truth of it. But his barrenness as a biographer I could forgive, if the simpleton had not thought himself a judge of his writings, and, under the erroneous influence of that thought informs his reader that Gotham, Independence, and the Times, were catchpennies. Gotham, unless I am a greater blockhead than he, which I am far from believing, is a noble and beautiful poem, and a poem with which I make no doubt the author took as much pains as with any he ever wrote. Making allowance (and Dryden, perhaps, in his Absalom and Achitophel stands in need of the same indulgence) for an unwarrantable use of scripture, it appears to me to be a masterly performance. Independence is a most animated piece, full of strength and spirit, and marked with that bold masculine character, which I think is the great peculiarity of this writer. And the Times (except that the subject is disgusting to the last degree) stands equally high in my opinion. He is indeed a careless writer for the most part, but where shall we find, in any of those authors who finish their works with the exactness of a Flemish pencil, those bold and daring strokes of fancy, those numbers so hazardously ventured upon and so happily finished, the matter so compressed and yet so clear, and the colouring so sparingly laid on and yet with such a beautiful effect? In short, it is not his least praise that he is never guilty of those faults as a writer which he lays to the charge of others: a proof that he did not judge by a borrowed standard, or from rules laid down by critics, but that he was qualified to do it

by his own native powers and his great superiority of genius: for he, that wrote so much and so fast, would, through inadvertence and hurry, unavoidably have departed from rules which he might have found in books, but his own truly poetical talent was a guide which could not suffer him to err. A race-horse is graceful in his swiftest pace, and never makes an awkward motion, though he is pushed to his utmost speed. A cart-horse might perhaps be taught to play tricks in the riding-school, and might prance and curvet like his betters, but at some unlucky time would be sure to betray the baseness of his original. It is an affair of very little consequence perhaps to the well-being of mankind, but I cannot help regretting that he died so soon. Those words of Virgil, upon the immature death of Marcellus, might serve for his epitaph.

> "Ostendent terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra
> Esse sinent ——."

Yours,
W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

My dear Friend—I find the Register in all respects an entertaining medley, but especially in this, that it has brought to my view some long forgotten pieces of my own production. I mean by the way two or three. Those I have marked with my own initials, and you may be sure I found them

peculiarly agreeable, as they had not only the grace of being mine but that of novelty likewise to recommend them. It is at least twenty years since I saw them. You, I think, was never a dabbler in rhyme. I have been one ever since I was fourteen years of age, when I began with translating an elegy of Tibullus. I have no more right to the name of a poet than a maker of mouse-traps has to that of an engineer; but my little exploits in this way have at times amused me so much, that I have often wished myself a good one. Such a talent in verse as mine is like a child's rattle, very entertaining to the trifler that uses it and very disagreeable to all beside. But it has served to rid me of some melancholy moments, for I only take it up as a gentleman-performer does his fiddle. I have this peculiarity belonging to me as a rhymist, that, though I am charmed to a great degree with my own work while it is on the anvil, I can seldom bear to look at it when it is once finished. The more I contemplate it the more it loses its value, till I am at last disgusted with it. I then throw it by, take it up again, perhaps ten years after, and am as much delighted with it as at the first.

Few people have the art of being agreeable when they talk of themselves; if you are not weary therefore, you pay me a high compliment.

I dare say Miss S———* was much diverted with the conjecture of her friends. The true key to the pleasure she found at Olney was plain enough to be seen, but they chose to overlook it.

* Miss Shuttleworth.

She brought with her a disposition to be pleased, which, whoever does, is sure to find a visit agreeable, because they make it so.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Olney, August 31, 1786.

My dear Friend—I began to fear for your health, and every day said to myself—I must write to Bagot soon, if it be only to ask him how he does—a measure that I should certainly have pursued long since, had I been less absorbed in Homer than I am. But such are my engagements in that quarter, that they make me, I think, good for little else.

Many thanks, my friend, for the names that you have sent me. The Bagots will make a most conspicuous figure among my subscribers, and I shall not, I hope, soon forget my obligations to them.

The unacquaintedness of modern ears with the divine harmony of Milton's numbers, and the principles upon which he constructed them, is the cause of the quarrel that they have with elisions in blank verse. But where is the remedy? In vain should you or I, and a few hundreds more perhaps who have studied his versification, tell them of the superior majesty of it, and that for that majesty it is greatly indebted to those elisions. In their ears they are discord and dissonance, they lengthen the line beyond its due limits, and are therefore not to

be endured. There is a whimsical inconsistence in the judgment of modern readers in this particular. Ask them all round, Whom do you account the best writer of blank verse? and they will reply, almost to a man, Milton, to be sure; Milton against the field! Yet if a writer of the present day should construct his numbers exactly upon Milton's plan, not one in fifty of these professed admirers of Milton would endure him. The case standing thus, what is to be done? An author must either be contented to give disgust to the generality, or he must humour them by sinning against his own judgment. This latter course, so far as elisions are concerned, I have adopted as essential to my success. In every other respect, I give as much variety in my measure as I can, I believe I may say as in ten syllables it is possible to give, shifting perpetually the pause and cadence, and accounting myself happy that modern refinement has not yet enacted laws against this also. If it had, I protest to you I would have dropped my design of translating Homer entirely; and, with what an indignant stateliness of reluctance I make them the concession that I have mentioned, Mrs. Unwin can witness, who hears all my complaints upon the subject.

After having lived twenty years at Olney, we are on the point of leaving it, but shall not migrate far. We have taken a house in the village of Weston. Lady Hesketh is our good angel, by whose aid we are enabled to pass into a better air and a more walkable country. The imprisonment that we have suffered here, for so many winters, has hurt us both.

That we may suffer it no longer, she stoops to Olney, lifts us from our swamp, and sets us down on the elevated grounds of Weston Underwood. There, my dear friend, I shall be happy to see you, and to thank you in person for all your kindness.

I do not wonder at the judgment that you form of—a foreigner; but you may assure yourself that, foreigner as he is, he has an exquisite taste in English verse. The man is all fire, and an enthusiast in the highest degree on the subject of Homer, and has given me more than once a jog, when I have been inclined to nap with my author. No cold water is to be feared from him that might abate my own fire, rather perhaps too much combustible.

Adieu! mon ami,

Yours, faithfully,

W. C.

We reserve our remarks on the next letter till its close.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Olney, Sept. 30, 1786.

My dear Friend—No length of separation will ever make us indifferent either to your pleasures or your pains. We rejoice that you have had so agreeable a jaunt and (excepting Mrs. Newton's terrible fall, from which, however, we are happy to find that she received so little injury,) a safe return. We, who live always encompassed by rural scenery, can afford to be stationary; though we ourselves, were I not too closely engaged with Homer, should perhaps follow

* Private Correspondence.

your example, and seek a little refreshment from variety and change of place—a course that we might find not only agreeable, but, after a sameness of thirteen years, perhaps useful. You must, undoubtedly, have found your excursion beneficial, who at all other times endure, if not so close a confinement as we, yet a more unhealthy one, in city air and in the centre of continual engagements.

Your letter to Mrs. Unwin, concerning our conduct, and the offence taken at it in our neighbourhood, gave us both a great deal of concern; and she is still deeply affected by it. Of this you may assure yourself, that, if our friends in London have been grieved, they have been misinformed; which is the more probable, because the bearers of intelligence hence to London are not always very scrupulous concerning the truth of their reports; and that, if any of our serious neighbours have been astonished, they have been so without the smallest real occasion. Poor people are never well employed even when they judge one another; but when they undertake to scan the motives and estimate the behaviour of those whom Providence has exalted a little above them, they are utterly out of their province and their depth. They often see us get into Lady Hesketh's carriage, and rather uncharitably suppose that it always carries us into a scene of dissipation, which, in fact, it never does. We visit, indeed, at Mr. Throckmorton's, and at Gayhurst; rarely, however, at Gayhurst, on account of the greater distance: more frequently, though not very frequently, at Weston, both because it is nearer, and

because our business in the house that is making ready for us often calls us that way. The rest of our journeys are to Bozeat turnpike and back again; or perhaps, to the cabinet-maker's at Newport. As Othello says,

> The very head and front of my offending
> Hath this extent, no more.

What good we can get or can do in these visits, is another question; which they, I am sure, are not at all qualified to solve. Of this we are both sure, that under the guidance of Providence we have formed these connexions; that we should have hurt the Christian cause, rather than have served it, by a prudish abstinence from them; and that St. Paul himself, conducted to them as we have been, would have found it expedient to have done as we have done. It is always impossible to conjecture, to much purpose, from the beginnings of a providence, in what it will terminate. If we have neither received nor communicated any spiritual good at present, while conversant with our new acquaintance, at least no harm has befallen on either side; and it were too hazardous an assertion even for our censorious neighbours to make, that, because the cause of the Gospel does not appear to have been served at present, therefore it never can be in any future intercourse that we may have with them. In the mean time, I speak a strict truth, and as in the sight of God, when I say that we are neither of us at all more addicted to gadding than heretofore. We both naturally love seclusion from company, and never go into it without putting a force upon our disposition; at the same

time, I will confess, and you will easily conceive, that the melancholy incident to such close confinement as we have so long endured finds itself a little relieved by such amusements as a society so innocent affords. You may look round the Christian world, and find few, I believe, of our station, who have so little intercourse as we with the world that is not Christian.

We place all the uneasiness that you have felt for us upon this subject to the account of that cordial friendship of which you have long given us proof. But you may be assured, that, notwithstanding all rumours to the contrary, we are exactly what we were when you saw us last:—I, miserable on account of God's departure from me, which I believe to be final; and she, seeking his return to me in the path of duty and by continual prayer.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

That the above letter may be fully understood, it is necessary to state that Mr. Newton had received an intimation from Olney that the habits of Cowper, since the arrival of Lady Hesketh, had experienced a change; and that an admonitory letter from himself might not be without its use. Under these circumstances, Newton addressed such a letter to his friend as the occasion seemed to require. The answer of Cowper is already before the reader, and in our opinion amounts to a full justification of the poet's conduct. We know, from various testimonies of unquestionable authority, that no charge tending

to impeach the consistency of Mrs. Unwin or of Cowper can justly be alleged. If Newton should be considered as giving too easy a credence to these reports, or too rigid and ascetic in his spirit, we conceive that he could not, consistently with his own views as a faithful minister, and his deep interest in the welfare of Cowper, have acted otherwise, though he may possibly have expressed himself too strongly. As to Newton's own spirit and temper, no man was more amiable and sociable in his feelings, nor the object of more affectionate esteem and regard in the circles where he was known. His character has been already described by Cowper, as that of a man that lived in an atmosphere of Christian peace and love. "It is therefore," observes the poet, "you were beloved at Olney, and if you preached to the Chicksaws and Chactaws, would be equally beloved by them."*

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, Oct. 6, 1786.

You have not heard, I suppose, that the ninth book of my translation is at the bottom of the Thames. But it is even so. A storm overtook it in its way to Kingston, and it sunk, together with the whole cargo of the boat in which it was a passenger. Not figuratively foreshowing, I hope, by its submersion, the fate of all the rest. My kind and generous cousin, who leaves nothing undone that she thinks can conduce to my comfort, encouragement, or convenience,

* See vol. i. p. 143.

is my transcriber also. *She* wrote the copy, and *she* will have to write it again—*hers*, therefore, is the damage. I have a thousand reasons to lament that the time approaches when we must lose her. She has made a winterly summer a most delightful one, but the winter itself we must spend without her.

W. C.

We are at length arrived at the period when Cowper removed to Weston. He fixed his residence there Nov. 15th, 1786. The first letters addressed from that place are to his friends Mr. Bagot and Newton.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston Underwood, Nov. 17, 1786.

My dear Friend—There are some things that do not actually shorten the life of man, yet seem to do so, and frequent removals from place to place are of that number. For my own part, at least, I am apt to think if I had been more stationary, I should seem to myself to have lived longer. My many changes of habitation have divided my time into many short periods, and when I look back upon them they appear only as the stages in a day's journey, the first of which is at no very great distance from the last.

I lived longer at Olney than any where. There indeed I lived till mouldering walls and a tottering

ouse warned me to depart. I have accordingly ıken the hint, and two days since arrived, or rather ɔok up my abode, at Weston. You perhaps have ever made the experiment, but I can assure you ıat the confusion which attends a transmigration f this kind is infinite, and has a terrible effect in eranging the intellects. I have been obliged to enounce my Homer on the occasion, and, though ıot for many days, I yet feel as if study and medi- ation, so long my confirmed habits, were on a sud- len become impracticable, and that I shall certainly ind them so when I attempt them again. But, in ı scene so much quieter and pleasanter than that vhich I have just escaped from, in a house so nuch more commodious, and with furniture about ne so much more to my taste, I shall hope to re- ɔover my literary tendency again, when once the ɔustle of the occasion shall have subsided.

How glad I should be to receive you under a roof where you would find me so much more comfortably accommodated than at Olney! I know your warmth of heart toward me, and am sure that you would rejoice in my joy. At present indeed I have not had time for much self-gratulation, but have every reason to hope nevertheless that in due time I shall derive considerable advantage, both in health and spirits, from the alteration made in my *where-about.*

I have now the twelfth book of the Iliad in hand, having settled the eleven first books finally, as I think, or nearly so. The winter is the time when I make the greatest riddance.

Adieu, my friend Walter! Let me hear from you, and

Believe me,
Ever yours,
W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston Underwood, Nov. 17, 1786.

My dear Friend—My usual time of answering your letters having been unavoidably engrossed by occasions that would not be thrust aside, I have been obliged to postpone the payment of my debt for a whole week. Even now it is not without some difficulty that I discharge it: which you will easily believe, when I tell you that this is only the second day that has seen us inhabitants of our new abode. When God speaks to a chaos, it becomes a scene of order and harmony in a moment; but when his creatures have thrown one house into confusion by leaving it, and another by tumbling themselves and their goods into it, not less than many days' labour and contrivance is necessary to give them their proper places. And it belongs to furniture of all kinds, however convenient it may be in its place, to be a nuisance out of it. We find ourselves here in a comfortable dwelling. Such it is in itself; and my cousin, who has spared no expense in dressing it up for us, has made it a genteel one. Such, at

* Private Correspondence.

t, it will be when its contents are a little har-
ized. She left us on Tuesday, and on Wednes-
in the evening Mrs. Unwin and I took possession.
uld not help giving a last look to my old prison
its precincts; and, though I cannot easily account
it, having been miserable there so many years,
something like a heart-ache when I took my last
e of a scene, that certainly in itself had nothing
ngage affection. But I recollected that I had
e been happy there, and could not, without tears
ny eyes, bid adieu to a place in which God had
ften found me. The human mind is a great
stery; mine, at least, appeared to me to be such
n this occasion. I found that I not only had a
derness for that ruinous abode, because it had
e known me happy in the presence of God; but
t even the distress I had suffered for so long a
e, on account of his absence, had endeared it to
as much. I was weary of every object, had
wished for a change, yet could not take leave
hout a pang at parting. What consequences are
ttend our removal, God only knows. I know
l that it is not in situation to effect a cure of
lancholy like mine. The change, however, has
n entirely a providential one; for, much as I
hed it, I never uttered that wish, except to Mrs.
win. When I learned that the house was to be
and had seen it, I had a strong desire that Lady
sketh should take it for herself, if she should
pen to like the country. That desire, indeed,
not exactly fulfilled; and yet, upon the whole,
xceeded. We are the tenants; but she assures

us that we shall often have her for a guest; and here is room enough for us all. You, I hope, my dear friend, and Mrs. Newton, will want no assurances to convince you that you will always be received here with the sincerest welcome. More welcome than you have been you cannot be; but better accommodated you may and will be.

Adieu, my dear friend. Mrs. Unwin's affectionate remembrances and mine conclude me ever yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston Lodge, Nov. 26, 1786.

It is my birth-day, my beloved Cousin, and I determine to employ a part of it, that it may not be destitute of festivity, in writing to you. The dark, thick fog that has obscured it would have been a burthen to me at Olney, but here I have hardly attended to it. The neatness and snugness of our abode compensates all the dreariness of the season, and, whether the ways are wet or dry, our house at least is always warm and commodious. Oh! for you, my cousin, to partake these comforts with us! I will not begin already to tease you upon that subject, but Mrs. Unwin remembers to have heard from your own lips that you hate London in the spring. Perhaps, therefore, by that time, you may be glad to escape from a scene which will be every day growing more disagreeable, that you may enjoy the comforts of the Lodge. You well know that

e best house has a desolate appearance unfur-
hed. This house accordingly, since it has been
:upied by us and our *meubles*, is as much superior
what it was when you saw it as you can imagine.
ıe parlour is even elegant. When I say that the
:lour is elegant, I do not mean to insinuate that
: study is not so. It is neat, warm, and silent, and
much better study than I deserve, if I do not
xduce in it an incomparable translation of Ho-
:r. I think every day of those lines of Milton,
d congratulate myself on having obtained, be-
'e I am quite superannuated, what he seems not
have hoped for sooner:

> " And may at length my weary age
> Find out the peaceful hermitage!"

ır if it is not a hermitage, at least it is a much
tter thing, and you must always understand, my
ar, that when poets talk of cottages, hermitages,
d such like things, they mean a house with six
ıhes in front, two comfortable parlours, a smart
ırcase, and three bed-chambers, of convenient
nensions; in short, exactly such a house as this.
The Throckmortons continue the most obliging
ighbours in the world. One morning last week,
:y both went with me to the cliffs—a scene, my
ar, in which you would delight beyond measure,
t which you cannot visit, except in the spring or
tumn. The heat of summer, and clinging dirt of
ıter, would destroy you. What is called the
ff, is no cliff, nor at all like one, but a beautiful ter-
:e, gently sloping down to the Ouse, and from the

brow of which, though not lofty, you have a view of such a valley, as makes that which you see from the hills near Olney, and which I have had the honour to celebrate, an affair of no consideration.*

Wintry as the weather is, do not suspect that it confines me. I ramble daily, and every day change my ramble. Wherever I go, I find short grass under my feet, and, when I have travelled perhaps five miles, come home with shoes not at all too dirty for a drawing-room. I was pacing yesterday under the elms, that surround the field in which stands the great alcove, when lifting my eyes I saw two black genteel figures bolt through a hedge into the path where I was walking. You guess already who they were, and that they could be nobody but our neighbours. They had seen me from a hill at a distance, and had traversed a great turnip field to get at me. You see, therefore, my dear, that I am in some request. Alas! in too much request with some peo-

* "How oft, upon yon eminence, our pace
Has slackened to a pause, and we have borne
The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
While Admiration, feeding at the eye,
And, still unsated, dwelt upon the scene.
Thence with what pleasure have we just discerned
The distant plough slow moving, and, beside
His labouring team, that swerved not from the track,
The sturdy swain, diminished to a boy!
Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course,
Delighted," &c. &c.

The Task, Book I.

ple. The verses of Cadwallader have found me at last.

I am charmed with your account of our little cousin* at Kensington. If the world does not spoil him hereafter, he will be a valuable man.

Good night, and may God bless thee!

W. C.

In the midst of the brightening prospects that seemed to await Cowper, by a change of residence so conducive to his health and spirits, his tender and affectionate feelings received a severe shock, by the unexpected intelligence of the death of Mr. Unwin. Few events could have made a more sensible inroad on his happiness, and on that of Mrs. Unwin. This zealous and truly excellent man had been taking a tour with Mr. Henry Thornton, when, on his return, he was seized with an attack at Winchester, which in a few days terminated his valuable life. How precarious are our enjoyments! By what a slender tenure do we hold every sublunary blessing, and how mysterious are the dispensations of Providence! The Rev. William Unwin, the endeared friend and correspondent of Cowper; the possessor of virtues that give a charm to domestic life, while divine grace hallowed their character and tendency; the devoted minister of Christ, turning many to righteousness, by the purity of his doctrine and the eminence of his example, was cut off in the midst of his career; when

* Lord Cowper.

his continuance was most needed by his family, and the influence of his principles had begun to be felt beyond the precincts of his parish. Happily for himself and his surviving friends, he died as he lived, supported by the hopes and consolations of the gospel, and with the assured prospect of a blessed immortality.

"And, behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."*

Cowper thus imparts the painful tidings to Lady Hesketh.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 4, 1786.

I sent you, my dear, a melancholy letter, and I do not know that I shall now send you one very unlike it. Not that any thing occurs in consequence of our late loss more afflictive than was to be expected, but the mind does not perfectly recover its tone after a shock like that which has been felt so lately. This I observe, that, though my experience has long since taught me that this world is a world of shadows, and that it is the more prudent as well as the more Christian course to possess the comforts that we find in it as if we possessed them not, it is no easy matter to reduce this doctrine into practice. We forget that that God

* Rev. xxi. 7; xxii. 12.

who gave them may, when he pleases, take them away; and that perhaps it may please him to take them at a time when we least expect, or are least disposed to part from them. Thus it has happened in the present case. There never was a moment in Unwin's life when there seemed to be more urgent want of him than the moment in which he died. He had attained to an age, when, if they are at any time useful, men become more useful to their families, their friends, and the world. His parish began to feel and to be sensible of the advantages of his ministry. The clergy around him were many of them awed by his example. His children were thriving under his own tuition and management, and his eldest boy is likely to feel his loss severely, being by his years, in some respect, qualified to understand the value of such a parent; by his literary proficiency too clever for a school-boy, and too young at the same time for the university. The removal of a man in the prime of life, of such a character, and with such connexions, seems to make a void in society that can never be filled. God seemed to have made him just what he was, that he might be a blessing to others, and, when the influence of his character and abilities began to be felt, removed him. These are mysteries, my dear, that we cannot contemplate without astonishment, but which will nevertheless be explained hereafter, and must in the mean time be revered in silence. It is well for his mother that she has spent her life in the practice of an habitual acquiescence in the dispensations of Providence, else I know that this

stroke would have been heavier, after all that she has suffered upon another account, than she could have borne. She derives, as she well may, great consolation from the thought that he lived the life and died the death of a Christian. The consequence is, if possible, more unavoidable than the most mathematical conclusion that, therefore, he is happy. So farewell, my friend Unwin! the first man for whom I conceived a friendship after my removal from St. Alban's, and for whom I cannot but still continue to feel a friendship, though I shall see thee with these eyes no more!

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, Dec. 9, 1786.

I am perfectly sure that you are mistaken, though I do not wonder at it considering the singular nature of the event, in the judgment that you form of poor Unwin's death, as it affects the interest of his intended pupil. When a tutor was wanted for him, you sought out the wisest and best man for the office within the circle of your connexions. It pleased God to take him home to himself. Men eminently wise and good are very apt to die, because they are fit to do so. You found in Unwin a man worthy to succeed him, and He, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, seeing no doubt that Unwin was ripe for a removal into a better state, removed him also. The matter

viewed in this light seems not so wonderful as to refuse all explanation, except such as in a melancholy moment you have given to it. And I am so convinced that the little boy's destiny had no influence at all in hastening the death of his tutors elect, that, were it not impossible on more accounts than one that I should be able to serve him in that capacity, I would without the least fear of dying a moment sooner, offer myself to that office; I would even do it, were I conscious of the same fitness for another and a better state that I believe them to have been both endowed with. In that case, I perhaps might die too, but, if I should, it would not be on account of that connexion. Neither, my dear, had your interference in the business any thing to do with the catastrophe. Your whole conduct in it must have been acceptable in the sight of God, as it was directed by principles of the purest benevolence.*

I have not touched Homer to day. Yesterday was one of my terrible seasons, and when I arose this morning I found that I had not sufficiently recovered myself to engage in such an occupation. Having letters to write, I the more willingly gave myself a dispensation. Good night.

Yours ever,

W. C.

* Lady Hesketh had placed a young friend of her's under a tutor, who died. She then consigned him to the care of Mr. Unwin, who also departed. Her mind was much afflicted by the singularity of this event, and the above letter is Cowper's reasoning upon it.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Weston, Dec. 9, 1786.

My dear Friend—We had just begun to enjoy the pleasantness of our new situation, to find at least as much comfort in it as the season of the year would permit, when affliction found us out in our retreat, and the news reached us of the death of Mr. Unwin. He had taken a western tour with Mr. Henry Thornton, and in his return, at Winchester, was seized with a putrid fever which sent him to his grave. He is gone to it, however, though young, as fit for it as age itself could have made him. Regretted, indeed, and always to be regretted, by those who knew him, for he had every thing that makes a man valuable both in his principles and in his manners, but leaving still this consolation to his surviving friends, that he was desirable in this world chiefly because he was so well prepared for a better.

I find myself here situated exactly to my mind. Weston is one of the prettiest villages in England, and the walks about it at all seasons of the year delightful. I know that you will rejoice with me in the change that we have made, and for which I am altogether indebted to Lady Hesketh. It is a change as great, as (to compare metropolitan things with rural) from St. Giles's to Grosvenor-square. Our house is in all respects commodious, and in some degree elegant; and I cannot give you a better idea of that which we have left than by telling

you the present candidates for it are a publican and a shoemaker.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston, Dec. 16, 1786.

My dear Friend—The death of one whom I valued as I did Mr. Unwin is a subject on which I could say much, and with much feeling. But, habituated as my mind has been these many years to melancholy themes, I am glad to excuse myself the contemplation of them as much as possible. I will only observe, that the death of so young a man, whom I so lately saw in good health, and whose life was so desirable on every account, has something in it peculiarly distressing. I cannot think of the widow and the children that he has left, without an heart-ache that I remember not to have felt before. We may well say, that the ways of God are mysterious: in truth they are so, and to a degree that only such events can give us any conception of. Mrs. Unwin begs me to give her love to you, with thanks for your kind letter. Her's has been so much a life of affliction, that whatever occurs to her in that shape has not, at least, the terrors of novelty to embitter it. She is supported under this, as she has been under a thousand others, with a submission of which I never saw her deprived for a moment.

Once, since we left Olney, I had occasion to call at our old dwelling; and never did I see so forlorn

* Private Correspondence.

and woeful a spectacle. Deserted of its inhabitants, it seemed as if it could never be dwelt in for ever. The coldness of it, the dreariness, and the dirt, made me think it no unapt resemblance of a soul that God has forsaken. While he dwelt in it, and manifested himself there, he could create his own accommodations, and give it occasionally the appearance of a palace; but the moment he withdraws, and takes with him all the furniture and embellishment of his graces, it becomes what it was before he entered it—the habitation of vermin, and the image of desolation. Sometimes I envy the living, but not much, or not long; for, while they live, as we call it, they too are liable to desertion. But the dead who have died in the Lord I envy always; for they, I take it for granted, can be no more forsaken.

This Babylon, however, that we have left behind us, ruinous as it is, the ceilings cracked and the walls crumbling, still finds some who covet it. A shoemaker and an alemonger have proposed themselves as joint candidates to succeed us. Some small difference between them and the landlord, on the subject of rent, has hitherto kept them out; but at last they will probably agree. In the mean time Mr. R—— prophesies its fall, and tells them that they will occupy it at the hazard of their lives, unless it be well propped before they enter it. We have not, therefore, left it much too soon; and this we knew before we migrated, though the same prophet would never speak out, so long as only our heads were in danger.

I wish you well through your laborious task of transcribing. I hope the good lady's meditations are such as amuse you rather more, while you copy them, than meditations in general would; which, for the most part, have appeared to me the most laboured, insipid, and unnatural of all productions.

Adieu my dear friend. Our love attends you both.

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, Dec. 21, 1786.

Your welcome letter, my beloved Cousin, which ought by the date to have arrived on Sunday, being by some untoward accident delayed, came not till yesterday. It came, however, and has relieved me from a thousand distressing apprehensions on your account.

The dew of your intelligence has refreshed my poetical laurels. A little praise now and then is very good for your hard-working poet, who is apt to grow languid, and perhaps careless without it. Praise I find affects us as money does. The more a man gets of it, with the more vigilance he watches over and preserves it. Such at least is its effect on me, and you may assure yourself that I will never lose a mite of it for want of care.

I have already invited the good Padre* in general terms, and he shall positively dine here next week,

* The Chaplain of John Throckmorton, Esq.

whether he will or not. I do not at all suspect that his kindness to Protestants has any thing insidious in it, any more than I suspect that he transcribes Homer for me with a view for my conversion. He would find me a tough piece of business I can tell him, for, when I had no religion at all, I had yet a terrible dread of the Pope. How much more now!

I should have sent you a longer letter, but was obliged to devote my last evening to the melancholy employment of composing a Latin inscription for the tombstone of poor William, two copies of which I wrote out and inclosed, one to Henry Thornton, and one to Mr. Newton.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, Jan. 3, 1787.

My dear Friend—You wish to hear from me at any calm interval of epic frenzy. An interval presents itself, but whether calm or not is perhaps doubtful. Is it possible for a man to be calm who for three weeks past has been perpetually occupied in slaughter; letting out one man's bowels, smiting another through the gullet, transfixing the liver of another, and lodging an arrow in a fourth? Read the thirteenth book of the Iliad, and you will find such amusing incidents as these the subject of it, the sole subject. In order to interest myself in it and to catch the spirit of it, I had need discard all humanity. It is woeful work; and were the best

poet in the world to give us at this day such a list of killed and wounded, he would not escape universal censure,—to the praise of a more enlightened age be it spoken. I have waded through much blood, and through much more I must wade before I shall have finished. I determine in the mean time to account it all very sublime, and for two reasons:—first, because all the learned think so, and secondly, because I am to translate it. But, were I an indifferent by-stander, perhaps I should venture to wish that Homer had applied his wonderful powers to a less disgusting subject: he has in the Odyssey, and I long to get at it.

I have not the good fortune to meet with any of these fine things that you say are printed in my praise. But I learn from certain advertisements in the Morning Herald that I make a conspicuous figure in the entertainments of Freemason's Hall. I learn also that my volumes are out of print, and that a third edition is soon to be published. But, if I am not gratified with the sight of odes composed to my honour and glory, I have at least been tickled with some *douceurs* of a very flattering nature by the post. A lady unknown addresses the best of men—an unknown gentleman has read my inimitable poems, and invites me to his seat in Hampshire—another incognito gives me hopes of a memorial in his garden, and a Welsh attorney sends me his verses to revise, and obligingly asks

> "Say, shall my little bark attendant sail,
> Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale?"

If you find me a little vain hereafter, my friend,

you must excuse it in consideration of these powerful incentives, especially the latter; for surely the poet who can charm an attorney, especially a Welsh one, must be at least an Orpheus, if not something greater.

Mrs. Unwin is as much delighted as myself with our present situation. But it is a sort of April weather life that we lead in this world. A little sunshine is generally the prelude to a storm. Hardly had we begun to enjoy the change when the death of her son cast a gloom upon every thing. He was a most exemplary man; of your order; learned, polite, and amiable; the father of lovely children, and the husband of a wife (very much like dear Mrs. Bagot) who adored him.

Adieu, my friend!

Your affectionate,

W. C.

The correspondence of Cowper was very limited this year, owing to a severe attack of nervous fever, which continued during a period of eight months, and greatly affected his health and spirits.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 8, 1787.

I have had a little nervous fever lately, my dear, that has somewhat abridged my sleep, and though I find myself better to-day than I have been since it seized me, yet I feel my head lightish, and not in the best order for writing. You will find me there-

e perhaps not only less alert in my manner than sually am when my spirits are good, but rather orter. I will however proceed to scribble till I d that it fatigues me, and then will do as I know u would bid me do were you here, shut up my sk and take a walk.

The good General tells me that in the eight first oks which I have sent him he still finds alterations d amendments necessary, of which I myself am ually persuaded; and he asks my leave to lay em before an intimate friend of his, of whom he ves a character that bespeaks him highly deserving ch a trust. To this I have no objection, desiring ly to make the translation as perfect as I can ake it. If God grant me life and health I would are no labour to secure that point. The General's tter is extremely kind, and both for matter and anner like all the rest of his dealings with his usin, the poet.

I had a letter also yesterday from Mr. Smith, ember for Nottingham. Though we never saw ch other, he writes to me in the most friendly rms, and interests himself much in my Homer, d in the success of my subscription. Speaking 1 this latter subject, he says, that my poems are ad by hundreds who know nothing of my pro- sals, and makes no doubt that they would subscribe they did. I have myself always thought them perfectly or rather insufficiently announced.

I could pity the poor woman who has been weak ough to claim my song: such pilferings are sure be detected. I wrote it, I know not how long,

but I suppose four years ago. The "Rose" in question was a rose given to Lady Austen by Mrs. Unwin, and the incident that suggested the subject occurred in the room in which you slept at the vicarage, which Lady Austen made her dining-room. Some time since, Mr. Bull going to London, I gave him a copy of it, which he undertook to convey to Nichols, the printer of the Gentleman's Magazine. He showed it to a Mrs. C——, who begged to copy it, and promised to send it to the printer's by her servant. Three or four months afterwards, and when I had concluded it was lost, I saw it in the Gentleman's Magazine, with my signature, "W. C." Poor simpleton! She will find now perhaps that the rose had a thorn, and that she has pricked her fingers with it. Adieu! my beloved Cousin.

W. C.

Though these verses, of which another claimed the authorship, will appear in the collection of poems, yet as they are so characterised by taste and beauty, and the incident which gave rise to them is mentioned in the above letter, we think the reader will be pleased with their insertion.

"The rose had been wash'd, just wash'd in a shower,
Which Mary * to Anna † convey'd;
The plentiful moisture encumber'd the flower,
And weigh'd down its beautiful head.

The cup was all fill'd, and the leaves were all wet,
And it seem'd to a fanciful view
To weep for the buds it had left with regret
On the flourishing bush where it grew.

* Mrs. Unwin. † Lady Austen.

I hastily seized it, unfit as it was,
For a nosegay, so dripping and drown'd;
And swinging it rudely, too rudely, alas!
I snapp'd it, it fell to the ground.

And such, I exclaim'd, is the pitiless part
Some act by the delicate mind;
Regardless of wringing and breaking a heart
Already to sorrow resign'd.

This elegant rose, had I shaken it less,
Might have bloom'd with its owner awhile,
And the tear that is wip'd with a little address,
May be follow'd perhaps by a smile."

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston, Jan. 13, 1787.

My dear Friend—It gave me pleasure, such as it was, to learn by a letter from Mr. H. Thornton, that the inscription for the tomb of poor Unwin has been approved of. The dead have nothing to do with human praises, but, if they died in the Lord, they have abundant praises to render to Him, which is far better. The dead, whatever they leave behind them, have nothing to regret. Good Christians are the only creatures in the world that are truly good, and them they will see again, and see them improved; therefore them they regret not. Regret is for the living: what we get, we soon lose, and what we lose, we regret. The most obvious consolation in this case seems to be, that we who regret others shall quickly become objects of regret ourselves;

* Private Correspondence.

for mankind are continually passing off in a rapid succession.

I have many kind friends who, like yourself, wish that, instead of turning my endeavours to a translation of Homer, I had proceeded in the way of original poetry. But I can truly say, that it was ordered otherwise, not by me, but by the Providence that governs all my thoughts and directs my intentions as he pleases. It may seem strange, but it is true, that, after having written a volume, in general with great ease to myself, I found it impossible to write another page. The mind of man is not a fountain but a cistern; and mine, God knows, a broken one. *It is my creed, that the intellect depends as much, both for the energy and the multitude of its exertions, upon the operations of God's agency upon it, as the heart, for the exercise of its graces, upon the influence of the Holy Spirit.* According to this persuasion, I may very reasonably affirm, that it was not God's pleasure that I should proceed in the same track, because he did not enable me to do it. A whole year I waited, and waited in circumstances of mind that made a state of non-employment peculiarly irksome to me. I longed for the pen, as the only remedy, but I could find no subject: extreme distress of spirit at last drove me as, if I mistake not, I told you some time since, to lay Homer before me, and translate for amusement. Why it pleased God that I should be hunted into such a business, of such enormous length and labour, by miseries for which He did not see good to afford me any other remedy, I know not. But so it was:

and jejune as the consolation may be, and unsuited to the exigencies of a mind that once was spiritual, yet a thousand times have I been glad of it; for a thousand times it has served at least to divert my attention, in some degree, from such terrible tempests as I believe have seldom been permitted to beat upon a human mind. Let my friends, therefore, who wish me some little measure of tranquillity in the performance of the most turbulent voyage that ever Christian mariner made, be contented, that, having Homer's mountains and forests to windward, I escape, under their shelter, from the force of many a gust that would almost overset me; especially when they consider that, not by choice, but by necessity, I make *them* my refuge. As to fame, and honour, and glory, that may be acquired by poetical feats of any sort: God knows, that if I could lay me down in my grave with hope at my side, or sit with hope at my side in a dungeon all the residue of my days, I would cheerfully wave them all. For the little fame that I have already earned has never saved me from one distressing night, or from one despairing day, since I first acquired it. *For* what I am reserved, or *to* what, is a mystery; I would fain hope, not merely that I may amuse others, or only to be a translator of Homer.

Sally Perry's case has given us much concern. I have no doubt that it is distemper. But distresses of mind, that are occasioned by distemper, are the most difficult of all to deal with. They refuse all consolation; they will hear no reason. God only,

by his own immediate impressions, can remove them; as after an experience of thirteen years' misery, I can abundantly testify.

Yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 18, 1787.

I have been so much indisposed with the fever that I told you had seized me, my nights during the whole week may be said to have been almost sleepless. The consequence has been, that, except the translation of about thirty lines at the conclusion of the thirteenth book, I have been forced to abandon Homer entirely. This was a sensible mortification to me, as you may suppose, and felt the more, because, my spirits of course failing with my strength, I seemed to have peculiar need of my old amusement. It seemed hard therefore to be forced to resign it just when I wanted it most. But Homer's battles cannot be fought by a man who does not sleep well, and who has not some little degree of animation in the daytime. Last night, however, quite contrary to my expectations, the fever left me entirely, and I slept quietly, soundly, and long. If it please God that it return not, I shall soon find myself in a condition to proceed. I walk constantly, that is to say, Mrs. Unwin and I together; for at these times I keep her continually employed, and never suffer her to be absent from me many minutes. She gives me all her time and

all her attention, and forgets that there is another object in the world.

Mrs. Carter thinks on the subject of dreams as every body else does, that is to say, according to her own experience. She has had no extraordinary ones, and therefore accounts them only the ordinary operations of the fancy. Mine are of a texture that will not suffer me to ascribe them to so inadequate a cause, or to any cause but the operation of an exterior agency. I have a mind, my dear, (and to you I will venture to boast of it,) as free from superstition as any man living, neither do I give heed to dreams in general as predictive, though particular dreams I believe to be so. Some very sensible persons, and, I suppose, Mrs. Carter among them, will acknowledge that in old times God spoke by dreams, but affirm with much boldness that he has since ceased to do so. If you ask them why, they answer, because he has now revealed his will in the Scripture, and there is no longer any need that he should instruct or admonish us by dreams. I grant that with respect to doctrines and precepts he has left us in want of nothing, but has he thereby precluded himself in any of the operations of his Providence? Surely not. It is perfectly a different consideration; and the same need that there ever was of his interference in this way there is still, and ever must be, while man continues blind and fallible, and a creature beset with dangers, which he can neither foresee nor obviate. His operations however of this kind are, I allow, very rare; and, as to the generality of dreams, they

are made of such stuff, and are in themselves so insignificant, that, though I believe them all to be the manufacture of others, not our own, I account it not a farthing-matter who manufactures them. So much for dreams!

My fever is not yet gone, but sometimes seems to leave me. It is altogether of the nervous kind, and attended now and then with much dejection.

A young gentleman called here yesterday who came six miles out of his way to see me. He was on a journey to London from Glasgow, having just left the University there. He came, I suppose, partly to satisfy his own curiosity, but chiefly, as it seemed, to bring me the thanks of some of the Scotch professors for my two volumes. His name is Rose, an Englishman. Your spirits being good, you will derive more pleasure from this incident than I can at present, therefore I send it.*

Adieu, very affectionately,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, July 24, 1787.

Dear Sir—This is the first time I have written these six months, and nothing but the constraint of

* Mr. Rose was the son of Dr. Rose, of Chiswick, who formerly kept a seminary there. He was at this time a young man, distinguished by talent and great amiableness of character, and won the regard and esteem of Cowper. He soon became one of his favourite correspondents.

obligation could induce me to write now. I cannot be so wanting to myself as not to endeavour, at least, to thank you both for the visits with which you have favoured me, and the poems that you sent me; in my present state of mind I taste nothing, nevertheless I read, partly from habit, and partly because it is the only thing I am capable of.

I have therefore read Burns' poems, and have read them twice; and, though they be written in a language that is new to me, and many of them on subjects much inferior to the author's ability, I think them on the whole a very extraordinary production. He is, I believe, the only poet these kingdoms have produced in the lower rank of life since Shakspeare (I should rather say since Prior) who need not be indebted for any part of his praise to a charitable consideration of his origin and the disadvantages under which he has laboured. It will be a pity if he should not hereafter divest himself of barbarism, and content himself with writing pure English, in which he appears perfectly qualified to excel. He who can command admiration dishonours himself if he aims no higher than to raise a laugh.

I am, dear Sir, with my best wishes for your prosperity, and with Mrs. Unwin's respects,

Your obliged and affectionate humble servant,

W. C.

Burns is one of those instances which the annals of literature occasionally furnish of genius surmounting every obstacle by its own natural powers, and rising to commanding eminence. He was a

Scottish peasant, born in Ayrshire, a native of that land where Fingal lived and Ossian sung.* He rose from the plough, to take his part in the polished and intellectual society of Edinburgh, where he was admitted to the intercourse of Robertson, Blair, Lord Monboddo, Stewart, Alison, and Mackenzie, and found a patron in the Earl of Glencairn.

His poetry is distinguished by the powers of a vivid imagination, a deep acquaintance with the recesses of the human heart, and an ardent and generous sensibility of feeling. It contains beautiful delineations of the scenery and manners of his country. "Many of her rivers and mountains," observes his biographer,† "formerly unknown to the muse, are now consecrated by his immortal verse; the Doon, the Lugar, the Ayr, the Nith, and the Cluden, will in future, like the Yarrow, the Tweed, and the Tay,

* The peasantry of Scotland do not resemble the same class of men in England, owing to a legal provision made by the Parliament of Scotland in 1646, whereby a school is established in every parish, for the express purpose of educating the poor. This statute was repealed on the accession of Charles the Second, in 1660, but was finally re-established by the Scottish Parliament, after the Revolution, in 1696. The consequence of this enactment is, that every one, even in the humblest condition of life, is able to read; and most persons are more or less skilled in writing and arithmetic. The moral effects are such, that it has been said, one quarter sessions for the town of Manchester has sent more felons for transportation than all the judges of Scotland consign during a whole year. Why is not a similar enactment made for Ireland, where there is more ignorance and consequently more demoralization, than in any country of equal extent in Europe?

† Dr. Currie.

be considered as classic streams, and their borders will be trod with new and superior emotions."

It is to be lamented that, owing to the dialect in which his poems are for the most part written, they are not sufficiently intelligible to English readers. His popular songs have given him much celebrity in his own country.*

Unhappily the fame of his genius attracted around him the gay and social, and his fine powers were wasted in midnight orgies; till he ultimately fell a victim to intemperance, in the thirty-eighth year of his age;† furnishing one more melancholy instance of genius not advancing the moral welfare and dignity of its possessor, because he rejected the guidance of prudence, and forgot that it is religion alone that can make men truly great or happy. How often is genius like a comet, eccentric in its course, which, after astonishing the world by its splendour, suddenly expires and vanishes!

We think that if a selection could be made from his works, excluding what is offensive, and retaining beauties which all must appreciate, an acceptable service might be rendered to the British public. Who can withhold their admiration from passages like these?

> "Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,
> And fondly broods with miser care;
> Time but the impression stronger makes,
> As streams their channels deeper wear."

* The national air of "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," is familiar to every one.

† He died in 1796.

Speaking of religion, he observes,

" 'Tis *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright,
'Tis *this* that gilds the horror of our night.
When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few;
When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue;
'Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart,
Disarms affliction, or repels his dart;
Within the breast bids purest raptures rise,
Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies."

We would also quote the following beautiful lines from his Cotter's (or Cottager's) Saturday Night, which represents the habits of domestic piety in humble life.

" Perhaps the *Christian Volume* is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How *He* who bore in heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head:
How his first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How *he*, who lone in *Patmos* banished,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand;
And heard great *Babylon* doom'd by Heaven's command."

" Then kneeling, unto Heaven's Eternal King,
The *saint*, *the father*, and the *husband* prays:
Hope 'springs exulting on triumphant wing,'
That *thus* they all shall meet in future days;
There ever bask in uncreated rays;
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear;
Together hymning their *Creator's* praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While time moves round in an eternal sphere."

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Aug. 27, 1787.

Dear Sir—I have not yet taken up the pen again, :ept to write to you. The little taste that I have l of your company, and your kindness in finding out, make me wish that we were nearer neigh- irs, and that there were not so great a disparity our years—that is to say, not that you were er, but that I were younger. Could we have :t in early life, I flatter myself that we might ve been more intimate than now we are likely to . But you shall not find me slow to cultivate ch a measure of your regard as your friends of ur own age can spare me. When your route all lie through this country, I shall hope that the me kindness which has prompted you twice to ll on me, will prompt you again, and I shall be ippy if, on a future occasion, I may be able to ve you a more cheerful reception than can be :pected from an invalid. My health and spirits 'e considerably improved, and I once more asso- ate with my neighbours. My head however has een the worst part of me, and still continues so ; subject to giddiness and pain, maladies very un- vourable to poetical employment; but a prepa- ition of the bark, which I take regularly, has so ir been of service to me in those respects, as to ncourage in me a hope that, by perseverance in ie use of it, I may possibly find myself qualified to esume the translation of Homer.

When I cannot walk, I read, and perhaps more than is good for me. But I cannot be idle. The only mercy that I show myself in this respect, is, that I read nothing that requires much closeness of application. I lately finished the perusal of a book, which in former years I have more than once attacked, but never till now conquered; some other book always interfered before I could finish it. The work I mean is Barclay's "Argenis;"* and, if ever you allow yourself to read for mere amusement, I can recommend it to you (provided you have not already perused it) as the most amusing romance that ever was written. It is the only one indeed of an old date that I ever had the patience to go through with. It is interesting in a high degree; richer in incident than can be imagined; full of surprises, which the reader never forestalls; and yet free from all entanglement and confusion. The style too appears to be such as would not dishonour Tacitus himself.

Poor Burns loses much of his deserved praise in this country, through our ignorance of his language. I despair of meeting with any Englishman who will take the pains that I have taken to understand him. His candle is bright, but shut up in a dark lantern. I lent him to a very sensible neighbour of mine. But his uncouth dialect spoiled all; and, before he had half read him through, he was quite bamboozled.

W. C.

* A Latin romance, once celebrated.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, August 30, 1787.

My dearest Cousin—Though it costs me something to write, it would cost me more to be silent. My intercourse with my neighbours being renewed, I can no longer seem to forget how many reasons there are why you especially should not be neglected; no neighbour indeed, but the kindest of my friends, and ere long, I hope, an inmate.

My health and spirits seem to be mending daily. To what end I know not, neither will conjecture, but endeavour, as far as I can, to be content that they do so. I use exercise, and take the air in the park and wilderness. I read much, but as yet write not. Our friends at the Hall make themselves more and more amiable in our account, by treating us rather as old friends than as friends newly acquired. There are few days in which we do not meet, and I am now almost as much at home in their house as in our own. Mr. Throckmorton, having long since put me in possession of all his ground, has now given me possession of his library. An acquisition of great value to me, who never have been able to live without books, since I first knew my letters, and who have no books of my own. By his means I have been so well supplied, that I have not even yet looked at the "Lounger" for which however I do not forget that I am obliged to you. *His* turn comes next, and I shall probably begin him to-morrow.

Mr. George Throckmorton is at the Hall. I thought I had known these brothers long enough to have found out all their talents and accomplishments. But I was mistaken. The day before yesterday, after having walked with us, they *carried* us up to the library, (a more accurate writer would have said *conducted* us,) and then they showed me the contents of an immense portfolio, the work of their own hands. It was furnished with drawings of the architectural kind, executed in a most masterly manner, and, among others, contained outside and inside views of the Pantheon, I mean the Roman one. They were all, I believe, made at Rome. Some men may be estimated at a first interview, but the Throckmortons must be seen often and known long before one can understand all their value.*

They often inquire after you, and ask me whether you visit Weston this autumn. I answer, yes; and I charge you, my dearest Cousin, to authenticate my information. Write to me, and tell us when we may expect to see you. We were disappointed that we had no letter from you this morning. You will

* With Mr., afterwards Sir John Throckmorton, the Editor had not the opportunity of being acquainted; but he would fail in rendering what is due to departed worth, if he did not record the high sense which he entertained of the virtues of his brother, Sir George Throckmorton. To the polished manners of the gentleman he united the accomplishments of the scholar and the man of taste and refinement; while the attention paid to the wants, the comforts, and instruction of the poor, in which another participated with equal promptness and delight, have left behind a memorial that will not soon be forgotten.

find me coated and buttoned according to your recommendation.

I write but little, because writing is become new to me; but I shall come on by degrees. Mrs. Unwin begs to be affectionately remembered to you. She is in tolerable health, which is the chief comfort here that I have to boast of.

Yours, my dearest Cousin, as ever,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Sept. 4, 1787.

My dearest Coz.—Come, when thou canst come, secure of being always welcome! All that is here is thine, together with the hearts of those who dwell here. I am only sorry, that your journey hither is necessarily postponed beyond the time when I did hope to have seen you; sorry too that my uncle's infirmities are the occasion of it. But years *will* have their course and their effect; they are happiest, so far as this life is concerned, who like him escape those effects the longest, and who do not grow old before their time. Trouble and anguish do that for some, which only longevity does for others. A few months since I was older than your father is now, and, though I have lately recovered, as Falstaff says, *some smatch of my youth*, I have but little confidence, in truth none, in so flattering a change, but expect, *when I least expect it*, to wither again. The past is a pledge for the future.

Mr. G. is here, Mrs. Throckmorton's uncle. He is lately arrived from Italy, where he has resided several years, and is so much the gentleman that it is impossible to be more so. Sensible, polite, obliging; slender in his figure, and in manners most engaging—every way worthy to be related to the Throckmortons.

I have read Savary's Travels into Egypt; Memoires du Baron de Tott; Fenn's Original Letters; the Letters of Frederick of Bohemia, and am now reading Memoires d'Henri de Lorraine, Duc de Guise.* I have also read Barclay's Argenis, a Latin romance, and the best romance that ever was written—all these, together with Madan's Letters to Priestley, and several pamphlets, within these two months. So I am a great reader.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Sept. 15, 1787.

My dearest Cousin—On Monday last I was invited to meet your friend, Miss J——, at the Hall, and there we found her. Her good nature, her humorous manner, and her good sense, are charming, insomuch that even I, who was never much addicted to speech-making, and who at present find myself particularly indisposed to it, could not help

* Savary's Travels are in repute; Baron de Tott, a series of eventful incidents; Fenn's, elucidation of past historical periods, Duc de Guise, the great opponent of the Huguenots in France.

saying at parting, I am glad that I have seen you, and sorry that I have seen so little of you. We were sometimes many in company; on Thursday we were fifteen, but we had not altogether so much vivacity and cleverness as Miss J——, whose talent at mirth-making has this rare property to recommend it, that nobody suffers by it.

I am making a gravel-walk for winter use, under a warm hedge in the orchard. It shall be furnished with a low seat for your accommodation, and if you do but like it I shall be satisfied. In wet weather, or rather after wet weather, when the street is dirty, it will suit you well, for, lying on an easy declivity through its whole length, it must of course be immediately dry.

You are very much wished for by our friends at the Hall—how much by me I will not tell you till the second week in October.

Yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Sept. 29, 1787.

My dear Coz.—I thank you for your political intelligence: retired as we are, and seemingly excluded from the world, we are not indifferent to what passes in it; on the contrary, the arrival of a newspaper, at the present juncture, never fails to furnish us with a theme for discussion, short indeed, but satisfactory, for we seldom differ in opinion.

I have received such an impression of the Turks,

from the memoirs of Baron de Tott, which I read lately, that I can hardly help presaging the conquest of that empire by the Russians. The disciples of Mahomet are such babies in modern tactics, and so enervated by the use of their favourite drug, so fatally secure in their predestinarian dream, and so prone to a spirit of mutiny against their leaders, that nothing less can be expected. In fact, they had not been their own masters at this day, had but the Russians known the weakness of their enemies half so well as they undoubtedly know it now. Add to this, that there is a popular prophecy current in both countries, that Turkey is one day to fall under the Russian sceptre. A prophecy, which, from whatever authority it be derived, as it will naturally encourage the Russians, and dispirit the Turks, in exact proportion to the degree of credit it has obtained on both sides, has a direct tendency to effect its own accomplishment. In the mean time, if I wish them conquered, it is only because I think it will be a blessing to them to be governed by any other hand than their own. For under heaven has there never been a throne so execrably tyrannical as theirs. The heads of the innocent that have been cut off to gratify the humour or caprice of their tyrants, could they be all collected and discharged against the walls of their city, would not leave one stone on another.

O that you were here this beautiful day! It is too fine by half to be spent in London. I have a perpetual din in my head, and, though I am not deaf, hear nothing aright, neither my own voice,

nor that of others. I am under a tub, from which tub accept my best love. Yours,

W. C.

The following letter discovers an afflicting instance of the delusion under which the interesting mind of Cowper laboured in some particular instances.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston Underwood, Oct. 2, 1787.

My dear Friend—After a long but necessary interruption of our correspondence, I return to it again, in one respect at least better qualified for it than before; I mean by a belief of your identity, which for thirteen years I did not believe. The acquisition of this light, if light it may be called which leaves me as much in the dark as ever on the most interesting subjects, releases me however from the disagreeable suspicion that I am addressing myself to you as the friend whom I loved and valued so highly in my better days, while in fact you are not that friend, but a stranger. I can now write to you without seeming to act a part, and without having any need to charge myself with dissimulation;—a charge from which, in that state of mind and under such an uncomfortable persuasion, I knew not how to exculpate myself, and which, as you will easily conceive, not seldom made my correspondence with you a burthen. Still, indeed, it wants, and is

* Private Correspondence.

likely to want, that best ingredient which can alone make it truly pleasant either to myself or you—that spirituality which once enlivened all our intercourse. You will tell me, no doubt, that the knowledge I have gained is an earnest of more and more valuable information, and that the dispersion of the clouds, in part, promises, in due time, their complete dispersion. I should be happy to believe it; but the power to do so is at present far from me. Never was the mind of man benighted to the degree that mine has been. The storms that have assailed me would have overset the faith of every man that ever had any; and the very remembrance of them, even after they have been long passed by, makes hope impossible.

Mrs. Unwin, whose poor bark is still held together, though shattered by being tossed and agitated so long at the side of mine, does not forget yours and Mrs. Newton's kindness on this last occasion. Mrs. Newton's offer to come to her assistance, and your readiness to have rendered us the same service, could you have hoped for any salutary effect of your presence, neither Mrs. Unwin nor myself undervalue, nor shall presently forget. But you judged right when you supposed, that even your company would have been no relief to me; the company of my father or my brother, could they have returned from the dead to visit me, would have been none to me.

We are busied in preparing for the reception of Lady Hesketh, whom we expect here shortly. We have beds to put up, and furniture for beds to make;

workmen, and scouring, and bustle. Mrs. Unwin's time has of course been lately occupied to a degree that made writing to her impracticable; and she excused herself the rather, knowing my intentions to take her office. It does not, however, suit me to write much at a time. This last tempest has left my nerves in a worse condition than it found them; my head especially, though better informed, is more infirm than ever. I will therefore only add our joint love to yourself and Mrs. Newton, and that I am, my dear friend,

Your affectionate

W. C.*

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Oct. 19, 1787.

Dear Sir—A summons from Johnson, which I received yesterday, calls my attention once more to the business of translation. Before I begin, I am willing to catch though but a short opportunity to acknowledge your last favour. The necessity of applying myself with all diligence to a long work, that has been but too long interrupted, will make my opportunities of writing rare in future.

Air and exercise are necessary to all men, but particularly so to the man whose mind labours, and to him who has been all his life accustomed to much of both they are necessary in the extreme. My

* This letter was addressed to Mr. Newton, on the writer's recovery from an attack of his grievous constitutional malady, which lasted eight months.

time, since we parted, has been devoted entirely to the recovery of health and strength for this service, and I am willing to hope with good effect. Ten months have passed since I discontinued my poetical efforts; I do not expect to find the same readiness as before, till exercise of the neglected faculty, such as it is, shall have restored it to me.

You find yourself, I hope, by this time as comfortably situated in your new abode as in a new abode one can be. I enter perfectly into all your feelings on occasion of the change. A sensible mind cannot do violence even to a local attachment without much pain. When my father died, I was young, too young to have reflected much. He was Rector of Berkhamstead, and there I was born. It had never occurred to me that a parson has no fee-simple in the house and glebe he occupies. There was neither tree, nor gate, nor stile, in all that country, to which I did not feel a relation, and the house itself I preferred to a palace. I was sent for from London to attend him in his last illness, and he died just before I arrived. Then, and not till then, I felt for the first time that I and my native place were disunited for ever. I sighed a long adieu to fields and woods, from which I once thought I should never be parted, and was at no time so sensible of their beauties as just when I left them all behind me, to return no more.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Oct. 20, 1787.

My dear Friend—My indisposition could not be of a worse kind. Had I been afflicted with a fever, or confined by a broken bone, neither of these cases would have made it impossible that we should meet. I am truly sorry that the impediment was insurmountable while it lasted, for such in fact it was. The sight of any face, except Mrs. Unwin's, was to me an insupportable grievance; and when it has happened that, by *forcing* himself into my hiding place, some friend has found me out, he has had no great cause to exult in his success, as Mr. Bull can tell you. From this dreadful condition of mind I emerged suddenly; so suddenly, that Mrs. Unwin, having no notice of such a change herself, could give none to any body; and when it obtained, how long it might last, or how far it was to be depended on, was a matter of the greatest uncertainty. It affects me on the recollection with the more concern, because I learn from your last, that I have not only lost an interview with you myself, but have stood in the way of visits that you would have gladly paid to others, and who would have been happy to have seen you. You should have forgotten (but you are not good at forgetting your friends) that such a creature as myself existed.

I rejoice that Mrs. Cowper has been so comfortably supported. She must have severely felt the

* Private Correspondence.

loss of her son. She has an affectionate heart toward her children, and could not but be sensible of the bitterness of such a cup. But God's presence sweetens every bitter. Desertion is the only evil that a Christian cannot bear.

I have done a deed for which I find some people thank me little. Perhaps I have only burned my fingers, and had better not have meddled. Last Sunday se'nnight I drew up a petition to Lord Dartmouth, in behalf of Mr. Postlethwaite. We signed it, and all the principal inhabitants of Weston followed our example.* What we had done was soon known in Olney, and an evening or two ago Mr. R—— called here, to inform me (for that seemed to be his errand) how little the measure that I had taken was relished by some of his neighbours. I vindicated my proceeding on the principles of justice and mercy to a laborious and well-deserving minister, to whom I had the satisfaction to find that none could allege one serious objection, and that all, except one, who objected at all, are persons who in reality ought to have no vote upon such a question. The affair seems still to remain undecided. If his lordship waits, which I a little suspect, till his steward shall have taken the sense of those with whom he is likely to converse upon the subject, and means to be determined by his report, Mr. Postlethwaite's case is desperate.

* The living of Olney had become vacant by the death of the Rev. Moses Brown, and an attempt was made to secure it for the Rev. Mr. Postlethwaite, the curate. Mr. Bean was ultimately appointed.

I beg that you will remember me affectionately to Mr. Bacon. We rejoice in Mrs. Newton's amended health, and when we can hear that she is restored shall rejoice still more. The next summer may prove more propitious to us than the past: if it should, we shall be happy to receive you and yours. Mrs. Unwin unites with me in love to you all three. She is tolerably well, and her writing was prevented by nothing but her expectation that I should soon do it myself.

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Nov. 10, 1787.

The parliament, my dearest Cousin, prorogued continually, is a meteor dancing before my eyes, promising me my wish only to disappoint me, and none but the king and his ministers can tell when you and I shall come together. I hope however that the period, though so often postponed, is not far distant, and that once more I shall behold you, and experience your power to make winter gay and sprightly.

I have a kitten, the drollest of all creatures that ever wore a cat's skin. Her gambols are not to be described, and would be incredible, if they could. In point of size she is likely to be a kitten always, being extremely small of her age, but time, I suppose, *that spoils* every thing, will make her also a

cat. You will see her, I hope, before that melancholy period shall arrive, for no wisdom that she may gain by experience and reflection hereafter will compensate the loss of her present hilarity. She is dressed in a tortoise-shell suit, and I know that you will delight in her.

Mrs. Throckmorton carries us to-morrow in her chaise to Chicheley. The event however must be supposed to depend on elements, at least on the state of the atmosphere, which is turbulent beyond measure. Yesterday it thundered, last night it lightened, and at three this morning I saw the sky as red as a city in flames could have made it. I have a leech in a bottle that foretells all these prodigies and convulsions of nature. No, not as you will naturally conjecture, by articulate utterance of oracular notices, but by a variety of gesticulations, which here I have not room to give an account of. Suffice it to say, that no change of weather surprises him, and that, in point of the earliest and most accurate intelligence, he is worth all the barometers in the world. None of them all indeed can make the least pretence to foretell thunder—a species of capacity of which he has given the most unequivocal evidence. I gave but sixpence for him, which is a groat more than the market price, though he is in fact, or rather would be, if leeches were not found in every ditch, an invaluable acquisition.

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Nov. 16, 1787.

I thank you for the solicitude that you express on the subject of my present studies. The work is indoubtedly long and laborious, but it has an end, nd, proceeding leisurely, with a due attention to he use of air and exercise, it is possible that I may ive to finish it. Assure yourself of one thing, that, hough to a bystander it may seem an occupation urpassing the powers of a constitution never very thletic, and at present not a little the worse for ear, I can invent for myself no employment that loes not exhaust my spirits more. I will not pretend o account for this; I will only say, that it is not the anguage of predilection for a favourite amusement, ut that the fact is really so. I have even found that hose plaything-avocations which one may execute lmost without any attention, fatigue me, and wear ne away, while such as engage me much and ttach me closely are rather serviceable to me than therwise. W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Nov. 27, 1787.

It is the part of wisdom, my dearest Cousin, to it down contented under the demands of necessity, ecause they are such. I am sensible that you cannot, n my uncle's present infirm state, and of which it s not possible to expect any considerable amend- ent, indulge either us or yourself with a journey *Weston.* *Yourself,* I say, both because I know

it will give you pleasure to see *Causidice mi** once more, especially in the comfortable abode where you have placed him, and because, after so long an imprisonment in London, you, who love the country, and have a taste for it, would of course be glad to return to it. For my own part, to me it is ever new, and though I have now been an inhabitant of this village a twelvemonth, and have during the half of that time been at liberty to expatiate and to make discoveries, I am daily finding out fresh scenes and walks, which you would never be satisfied with enjoying—some of them are unapproachable by you either on foot or in your carriage. Had you twenty toes (whereas I suppose you have but ten) you could not reach them; and coach-wheels have never been seen there since the flood. Before it indeed, (as Burnet says that the earth was then perfectly free from all inequalities in its surface,)† they might have been seen there every day. We have other walks, both upon hill tops and in valleys beneath, some of which, by the help of your carriage, and many of them without its help, would be always at your command.

On Monday morning last, Sam brought me word that there was a man in the kitchen who desired to speak with me. I ordered him in. A plain, decent, elderly figure made its appearance, and, being desired to sit, spoke as follows: "Sir, I am clerk of the parish of All-saints in Northampton; brother of

* The appellation which Sir Thomas Hesketh used to give him in jest, when he was of the Temple.

† See Burnet's Theory of the Earth, in which book, as well as by other writers, the formation of mountains is attributed to the agency of the great deluge. The deposit of marine shells is alleged as favouring this hypothesis.

[r. C. the upholsterer. It is customary for the ɛrson in my office to annex to a bill of mortality, hich he publishes at Christmas, a copy of verses. ou will do me a great favour, Sir, if you would ırnish me with one." To this I replied, "Mr. C., ou have several men of genius in your town, why ave you not applied to some of them? There is a amesake of yours in particular, C——, the statuary, ho, every body knows, is a first-rate maker of erses. He surely is the man of all the world for our purpose."—"Alas! Sir, I have heretofore borowed help from him, but he is a gentleman of so nuch reading that the people of our town cannot nderstand him." I confess to you, my dear, I felt ll the force of the compliment implied in this peech, and was almost ready to answer, "Perhaps, ny good friend, they may find me unintelligible too or the same reason." But, on asking him whether ıe had walked over to Weston on purpose to imɔlore the assistance of my muse, and on his replying n the affirmative, I felt my mortified vanity a little ɔonsoled, and, pitying the poor man's distress, which ıppeared to be considerable, promised to supply ıim. The waggon has accordingly gone this day ɔo Northampton loaded in part with my effusions in ɔhe mortuary style. A fig for poets who write epiɔaphs upon individuals! I have written *one*, that ɜerves *two hundred* persons.*

* We introduce one stanza from these verses:—

"Like crowded forest trees we stand,
And some are mark'd to fall;
The axe will smite at God's command,
And soon shall smite us all."

A few days since I received a second very obliging letter from Mr. M——. He tells me that his own papers, which are by far (he is sorry to say it) the most numerous, are marked V. I. Z.* Accordingly, my dear, I am happy to find that I am engaged in a correspondence with Mr. Viz, a gentleman for whom I have always entertained the profoundest veneration. But the serious fact is, that the papers distinguished by those signatures have ever pleased me most, and struck me as the work of a sensible man, who knows the world well, and has more of Addison's delicate humour than any body.

A poor man begged food at the Hall lately. The cook gave him some vermicelli soup. He ladled it about some time with the spoon, and then returned it to her, saying, "I am a poor man it is true, and I am very hungry, but yet I cannot eat broth with maggots in it." Once more, my dear, a thousand thanks for your box full of good things, useful things, and beautiful things.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 4, 1787.

I am glad, my dearest Coz, that my last letter proved so diverting. You may assure yourself of the literal truth of the whole narration, and that, however droll, it was not in the least indebted to any embellishments of mine.

* In a periodical called "The Lounger."

You say well, my dear, that in Mr. Throckmorton we have a peerless neighbour; we have so. In point of information upon all important subjects, in respect too of expression and address, and, in short, every thing that enters into the idea of a gentleman, I have not found his equal (not often) any where. Were I asked, who in my judgment approaches nearest to him in all his amiable qualities and qualifications, I should certainly answer, his brother George, who, if he be not his exact counterpart, endued with precisely the same measure of the same accomplishments, is nevertheless deficient in none of them, and is of a character singularly agreeable, in respect of a certain manly, I had almost said heroic, frankness, with which his air strikes one almost immediately. So far as his opportunities have gone, he has ever been as friendly and obliging to us as we could wish him, and, were he lord of the Hall tomorrow, would, I dare say, conduct himself toward us in such a manner as to leave us as little sensible as possible of the removal of its present owners. But all this I say, my dear, merely for the sake of stating the matter as it is; not in order to obviate or to prove the inexpedience of any future plan of yours concerning the place of our residence. Providence and time shape every thing—I should rather say Providence alone, for time has often no hand in the wonderful changes that we experience; they take place in a moment. It is not therefore worth while perhaps to consider much what we will or will not do in years to come, concerning which all that I can say with certainty at present is, that

those years will be the most welcome in which I can see the most of you.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, Dec. 6, 1787.

My dear Friend—A short time since, by the help of Mrs. Throckmorton's chaise, Mrs. Unwin and I reached Chichely. "Now," said I to Mrs. Chester, "I shall write boldly to your brother Walter, and will do it immediately. I have passed the gulf that parted us, and he will be glad to hear it." But let not the man who translates Homer be so presumptuous as to have a will of his own, or to promise any thing. A fortnight has, I suppose, elapsed since I paid this visit, and I am only now beginning to fulfil what I then undertook to accomplish without delay. The old Grecian must answer for it.

I spent my morning there so agreeably that I have ever since regretted more sensibly that there are five miles of a dirty country interposed between us. For the increase of my pleasure, I had the good fortune to find your brother, the Bishop, there. We had much talk about many things, but most, I believe, about Homer; and great satisfaction it gave me to find that on the most important points of that subject his Lordship and I were exactly of one mind. In the course of our conversation, he produced from his pocket-book a translation of the first ten or twelve lines of the Iliad, and, in order to leave my judgment free, informed me kindly at the

ıe time that they were not his own. I read m, and, according to the best of my recollection the original, found them well executed. The hop indeed acknowledged that they were not ltless, neither did I find them so. Had they n such, I should have felt their perfection as a ɔouragement hardly to be surmounted; for at t passage I have laboured more abundantly than ıny other, and hitherto with the least success. ım convinced that Homer placed it at the eshold of his work as a scarecrow to all trans- ırs. Now, Walter, if thou knowest the author of ; version, and it be not treason against thy ther's confidence in thy secrecy, declare him to . Had I been so happy as to have seen the hop again before he left this country, I should tainly have asked him the question, having a iosity upon the matter that is extremely trouble- ıe.*

The awkward situation in which you found your- ' on receiving a visit from an authoress, whose 'ks, though presented to you long before, you l never read, made me laugh, and it was no sin inst my friendship for you to do so. It was a culous distress, and I can laugh at it even now. ope she catechized you well. How did you ex- ıate yourself?—Now laugh at me. The clerk of parish of All Saints, in the town of Northampton, ing occasion for a poet, has appointed me to the ɔe. I found myself obliged to comply. The l-man comes next, and then, I think, though

* The author was Lord Bagot.

even borne upon your swan's quill, I can soar no higher!

I am, my dear friend, faithfully yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 10, 1787.

I thank you for the snip of cloth, commonly called a pattern. At present I have two coats, and but one back. If at any time, hereafter, I should find myself possessed of fewer coats, or more backs, it will be of use to me.

Though I have thought proper never to take any notice of the arrival of my MSS. together with the *other good things* in the box, yet certain it is that I received them. I have furbished up the tenth book till it is as bright as silver, and am now occupied in bestowing the same labour upon the eleventh. The twelfth and thirteenth are in the hands of ——, and the fourteenth and fifteenth are ready to succeed them. This notable job is the delight of my heart, and how sorry shall I be when it is ended!

The smith and the carpenter, my dear, are both in the room hanging a bell; if I therefore make a thousand blunders let the said intruders answer for them all.

I thank you, my dear, for your history of the G——s. What changes in that family! And how many thousand families have in the same time experienced changes as violent as theirs! The course

of a rapid river is the justest of all emblems to express the variableness of our scene below. Shakspeare says, none ever bathed himself twice in the same stream, and it is equally true that the world upon which we close our eyes at night is never the same with that on which we open them in the morning.

I do not always say, give my love to my uncle,* because he knows that I always love him. I do not always present Mrs. Unwin's love to you, partly for the same reason, (deuce take the smith and the carpenter,) and partly because I forget it. But, to present my own, I forget never, for I always have to finish my letter, which I know not how to do, my dearest Coz, without telling you, that I am

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Dec. 13, 1787.

Dear Sir—Unless my memory deceives me, I forewarned you that I should prove a very unpunctual correspondent. The work that lies before me engages unavoidably my whole attention. The length of it, the spirit of it, and the exactness that is requisite to its due performance, are so many most interesting subjects of consideration to me, who find that my best attempts are only introductory to others, and that what to-day I suppose finished,

* Ashley Cowper, Esq.

to-morrow I must begin again. Thus it fares with a translator of Homer. To exhibit the majesty of such a poet in a modern language is a task that no man can estimate the difficulty of till he attempts it. To paraphrase him loosely, to hang him with trappings that do not belong to him, all this is comparatively easy. But to represent him with only his own ornaments, and still to preserve his dignity, is a labour that, if I hope in any measure to achieve it, I am sensible can only be achieved by the most assiduous and most unremitting attention. Our studies, however different in themselves, in respect of the means by which they are to be successfully carried on, bear some resemblance to each other. A perseverance that nothing can discourage, a minuteness of observation that suffers nothing to escape, and a determination not to be seduced from the straight line that lies before us by any images with which fancy may present us, are essentials that should be common to us both. There are, perhaps, few arduous undertakings that are not in fact more arduous than we at first supposed them. As we proceed, difficulties increase upon us, but our hopes gather strength also, and we conquer difficulties which, could we have foreseen them, we should never have had the boldness to encounter. May this be your experience, as I doubt not that it will. You possess by nature all that is necessary to success in the profession that you have chosen. What remains is in your own power. They say of poets that they must be born such: so must mathematicians, so must great generals, and so must lawyers, and so indeed

nust men of all denominations, or it is not possible hat they should excel. But, with whatever faculies we are born, and to whatever studies our genius nay direct us, studies they must still be. I am ersuaded that Milton did not write his "Paradise ost," nor Homer his "Iliad," nor Newton his 'Principia," without immense labour. Nature gave hem a bias to their respective pursuits, and that trong propensity, I suppose, is what we mean by enius. The rest they gave themselves. "Macte sto," therefore have no fears for the issue!

I have had a second kind letter from your friend, Mr. ——, which I have just answered. I must not, find, hope to see him here, at least, I must not nuch expect it. He has a family that does not permit him to fly southward. I have also a notion that ve three could spend a few days comfortably togeher, especially in a country like this, abounding in cenes with which I am sure you would both be deighted. Having lived till lately at some distance rom the spot that I now inhabit, and having never een master of any sort of vehicle whatever, it is ut just now that I begin myself to be acquainted vith the beauties of our situation. To you I may ope one time or other to show them, and shall be happy to do it when an opportunity offers.

Yours, most affectionately,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 1, 1788.

Now for another story almost incredible! A story that would be quite such, if it was not certain that you give me credit for any thing. I have read the poem for the sake of which you sent the paper, and was much entertained by it. You think it perhaps, as very well you may, the only piece of that kind that was ever produced. It is indeed original, for I dare say Mr. Merry never saw mine; but certainly it is not unique. For most true it is, my dear, that ten years since, having a letter to write to a friend of mine to whom I could write any thing, I filled a whole sheet with a composition, both in measure and in manner, precisely similar. I have in vain searched for it. It is either burnt or lost. Could I have found it, you would have had double postage to pay. For that one man in Italy and another in England, who never saw each other, should stumble on a species of verse, in which no other man ever wrote (and I believe that to be the case) and upon a style and manner too of which, I suppose, that neither of them had ever seen an example, appears to me so extraordinary a fact that I must have sent you mine, whatever it had cost you, and am really vexed that I cannot authenticate the story by producing a voucher. The measure I recollect to have been perfectly the same, and as to the manner I am equally sure of that, and from this circumstance, that Mrs. Unwin and I never laughed

re at any production of mine, perhaps not even John Gilpin. But for all this, my dear, you must, I said, give me credit, for the thing itself is gone that limbo of vanity where alone, says Milton, ngs lost on earth are to be met with. Said limbo as you know, in the moon, whither I could not at sent convey myself without a good deal of diffi- ty and inconvenience.

This morning, being the morning of new year's , I sent to the Hall a copy of verses, addressed Mrs. Throckmorton, entitled, "The Wish, or the et's New Year's Gift." We dine there to-morrow, en I suppose I shall hear news of them.* Their dness is so great, and they seize with such eager-

The poet's wish is so expressive of the poet's taste, and e is so beautiful a turn in these complimentary verses, that annot resist the pleasure of inserting them.

THE POET'S NEW YEAR'S GIFT

TO MRS. THROCKMORTON.

"Maria! I have every good
For thee wish'd many a time,
Both sad and in a cheerful mood,
But never yet in rhyme.

To wish thee fairer is no need,
More prudent, or more sprightly,
Or more ingenious, or more freed
From temper-flaws unsightly.

What favour then not yet possess'd
Can I for thee require,
In wedded love already blest,
To thy whole heart's desire?

ness every opportunity of doing all they think will please us, that I held myself almost in duty bound to treat them with this stroke of my profession.

The small-pox has done, I believe, all that it has to do at Weston. Old folks, and even women with child, have been inoculated. We talk of our freedom, and some of us are free enough, but not the poor. Dependent as they are upon parish bounty, they are sometimes obliged to submit to impositions which, perhaps in France itself, could hardly be paralleled. Can man or woman be said to be free, who is commanded to take a distemper sometimes, at least, mortal, and in circumstances most likely to make it so? No circumstance whatever was permitted to exempt the inhabitants of Weston. The old as well as the young, and the pregnant as well as they who had only themselves within them, have been inoculated. Were I asked who is the most arbitrary sovereign on earth, I should answer, neither the king of France, nor the grand signior, but an overseer of the poor in England.*

None here is happy but in part;
Full bliss is bliss divine;
There dwells some wish in every heart,
And doubtless one in thine.

That wish, on some fair future day,
Which fate shall brightly gild,
('Tis blameless, be it what it may,)
I wish it all fulfill'd."

* The discovery of vaccination, since the above period, has entitled the name of Jenner to rank among the benefactors of mankind.

I am as heretofore occupied with Homer: my present occupation is the revisal of all I have done, viz. of the first fifteen books. I stand amazed at my own increasing dexterity in the business, being verily persuaded that, as far as I have gone, I have improved the work to double its value.

That you may begin the new year and end it in all health and happiness, and many more when the present shall have been long an old one, is the ardent wish of Mrs. Unwin and of yours, my dearest Coz. most cordially.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, Jan. 5, 1788.

My dear Friend—I thank you for your information concerning the author of the translation of those lines. Had a man of less note and ability than Lord Bagot produced it, I should have been discouraged. As it is, I comfort myself with the thought that even he accounted it an achievement worthy of his powers, and that even he found it difficult. Though I never had the honour to be known to his lordship, I remember him well at Westminster, and the reputation in which he stood there. Since that time I have never seen him except once, many years ago, in the House of Commons, when I heard him speak on the subject of a drainage bill better than any member there.

My first thirteen books have been criticised in

London; have been by me accommodated to those criticisms, returned to London in their improved state, and sent back to Weston with an imprimatur. This would satisfy some poets less anxious than myself about what they expose in public; but it has not satisfied me. I am now revising them again by the light of my own critical taper, and make more alterations than at first. But are they improvements? you will ask. Is not the spirit of the work endangered by all this attention to correctness? I think and hope that it is not. Being well aware of the possibility of such a catastrophe, I guard particularly against it. Where I find that a servile adherence to the original would render the passage less animated than it would be, I still, as at the first, allow myself a liberty. On all other occasions I prune with an unsparing hand, determined that there shall not be found in the whole translation an idea that is not Homer's. My ambition is to produce the closest copy possible, and at the same time as harmonious as I know how to make it. This being my object, you will no longer think, if indeed you have thought it at all, that I am unnecessarily and over-much industrious. The original surpasses every thing; it is of an immense length, is composed in the best language ever used upon earth, and deserves, indeed demands, all the labour that any translator, be he who he may, can possibly bestow on it. Of this I am sure, and your brother, the good Bishop, is of the same mind, that at present mere English readers know no more of Homer in reality than if he had never been translated. That consideration

indeed it was, which mainly induced me to the undertaking; and if, after all, either through idleness or dotage upon what I have already done, I leave it chargeable with the same incorrectness as my predecessors, or indeed with any other that I may be able to amend, I had better have amused myself otherwise: and you, I know, are of my opinion.

I send you the clerk's verses, of which I told you. They are very clerk-like, as you will perceive. But plain truth in plain words seemed to me to be the *ne plus ultra* of composition on such an occasion. I might have attempted something very fine, but then the persons principally concerned, viz. my readers, would not have understood me. If it puts them in mind that they are mortal, its best end is answered.

My dear Walter, adieu!

Yours faithfully,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 19, 1788.

When I have prose enough to fill my paper, which is always the case when I write to you, I cannot find in my heart to give a third part of it to verse. Yet this I must do, or I must make my packets more costly than worshipful, by doubling the postage upon you, which I should hold to be unreasonable. See then the true reason why I did not send you that same scribblement * till you desired it.

* The verses on the new year.

The thought which naturally presents itself to me on all such occasions is this:—Is not your cousin coming? Why are you impatient? Will it not be time enough to show her your fine things when she arrives?

Fine things indeed I have few. He who has Homer to transcribe may well be contented to do little else. As when an ass, being harnessed with ropes to a sand-cart, drags with hanging ears his heavy burden, neither filling the long-echoing streets with his harmonious bray, nor throwing up his heels behind, frolicsome and airy, as asses less engaged are wont to do; so I, satisfied to find myself indispensably obliged to render into the best possible English metre eight-and-forty Greek books, of which the two finest poems in the world consist, account it quite sufficient if I may at last achieve that labour, and seldom allow myself those pretty little vagaries in which I should otherwise delight, and of which, if I should live long enough, I intend hereafter to enjoy my fill.

This is the reason, my dear Cousin, if I may be permitted to call you so in the same breath with which I have uttered this truly heroic comparison; this is the reason why I produce at present but few occasional poems, and the preceding reason is that which may account satisfactorily enough for my withholding the very few that I do produce. A thought sometimes strikes me before I rise; if it runs readily into verse, and I can finish it before breakfast, it is well, otherwise it dies and is forgotten; for all the subsequent hours are devoted to Homer.

The day before yesterday I saw for the first time Bunbury's * new print, the "Propagation of a Lie." Mr. Throckmorton sent it for the amusement of our party. Bunbury sells humour by the yard, and is, I suppose, the first vender of it who ever did so. He cannot therefore be said to have humour without measure (pardon a pun, my dear, from a man who has not made one before these forty years) though he may certainly be said to be immeasurably droll.

The original thought is good, and the exemplification of it in those very expressive figures, admirable. A poem on the same subject, displaying all that is displayed in those attitudes and in those features (for faces they can hardly be called) would be most excellent. The affinity of the two arts, viz. verse and painting, has been often observed; possibly the happiest illustration of it would be found, if some poet would ally himself to some draftsman, as Bunbury, and undertake to write every thing he should draw. Then let a musician be admitted of the party. He should compose the said poem, adapting notes to it exactly accommodated to the theme; so should the sister arts be proved to be indeed sisters, and the world die of laughing.

W. C.

* The celebrated caricaturist.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON. *

Jan. 21, 1788.

My dear Friend—Your last letter informed us that you were likely to be much occupied for some time in writing on a subject that must be interesting to a person of your feelings—the Slave Trade. I was unwilling to interrupt your progress in so good a work, and have therefore enjoined myself a longer silence than I should otherwise have thought excusable; though, to say the truth, did not our once intimate fellowship in the things of God recur to my remembrance, and present me with something like a warrant for doing it, I should hardly prevail with myself to write at all. Letters, such as mine, to a person of a character such as yours, are like snow in harvest; and you well say that, if I will send you a letter that you can answer, I shall make your part of the business easier than it is. This I would gladly do; but though I abhor a vacuum as much as Nature herself is said to do, yet a vacuum I am bound to feel of all such matter as may merit your perusal.

I expected that before this time I should have had the pleasure of seeing your friend Mr. Bean,† but his stay in this country was so short, that it was hardly possible he should find an opportunity to call. I have not only heard a high character of that

* Private Correspondence.

† Formerly Vicar of Olney, and now one of the Librarians of the British Museum.

gentleman from yourself, whose opinion of men, as well as of other matters, weighs more with me than any body's; but from two or three different persons likewise, not ill qualified to judge. From all that I have heard, both from you and them, I have every reason to expect that I shall find him both an agreeable and useful neighbour; and if he can be content with me, (for that seems doubtful, poet as I am, and now, alas! nothing more,) it seems certain that I shall be highly satisfied with him.

Here is much shifting and changing of ministers. Two are passing away, and two are stepping into the places. Mr. B———,* I suppose, whom I know not, is almost upon the wing; and Mr. P——,† with whom I have not been very much acquainted, is either going or gone. A Mr. C—— is come to occupy, for the present at least, the place of the former; and if he can possess himself of the two curacies of Ravenstone and Weston, will, I imagine, take up his abode here. Having, as I understood, no engagements elsewhere, he will doubtless be happy to obtain a lasting one in this country. What acceptance he finds among the people of Ravenstone I have not heard, but at Olney, where he has preached once, he was hailed as the Sun by the Greenlanders after half a year of lamp-light.

Providence interposed to preserve me from the heaviest affliction that I can now suffer, or I had lately lost Mrs. Unwin, and in a way the most

* Mr. Bean. † Mr. Postlethwaite.

shocking imaginable. Having kindled her fire in the room where she dresses, (an office that she always performs for herself,) she placed the candle on the hearth, and kneeling addressed herself to her devotions. A thought struck her, while thus occupied, that the candle being short might possibly catch her clothes. She pinched it out with the tongs, and set it on the table. In a few minutes the chamber was so filled with smoke, that her eyes watered, and it was hardly possible to see across it. Supposing that it proceeded from the chimney, she pushed the billets backward, and, while she did so, casting her eye downward, perceived that her dress was on fire. In fact, before she extinguished the candle, the mischief that she apprehended was begun; and when she related the matter to me, she showed me her clothes with a hole burnt in them as large as this sheet of paper. It is not possible, perhaps, that so tragical a death should overtake a person actually engaged in prayer, for her escape seems almost a miracle. Her presence of mind, by which she was enabled, without calling for help or waiting for it, to gather up her clothes and plunge them, burning as they were, in water, seems as wonderful a part of the occurrence as any. The very report of fire, though distant, has rendered hundreds torpid and incapable of self-succour; how much more was such a disability to be expected, when the fire had not seized a neighbour's house, or begun its devastations on our own, but was actually consuming the apparel that she wore, and seemed in possession of her person.

It draws toward supper-time. I therefore heartily wish you a good night; and, with our best affections to yourself, Mrs. Newton, and Miss Catlett, I remain, my dear friend, truly and warmly yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 30, 1788.

My dearest Coz—It is a fortnight since I heard from you, that is to say, a week longer than you have accustomed me to wait for a letter. I do not forget that you have recommended it to me, on occasions somewhat similar, to banish all anxiety, and to ascribe your silence only to the interruptions of company. Good advice, my dear, but not easily taken by a man circumstanced as I am. I have learned in the school of adversity, a school from which I have no expectation that I shall ever be dismissed, to apprehend the worst, and have ever found it the only course in which I can indulge myself without the least danger of incurring a disappointment. This kind of experience, continued through many years, has given me such an habitual bias to the gloomy side of every thing, that I never have a moment's ease on any subject to which I am not indifferent. How then can I be easy when I am left afloat upon a sea of endless conjectures, of which you furnish the occasion. Write, I beseech you, and do not forget that I am now a battered actor upon this turbulent stage; that what little

vigour of mind I ever had, of the self-supporting kind I mean, has long since been broken; and that, though I can bear nothing well, yet any thing better than a state of ignorance concerning your welfare. I have spent hours in the night leaning upon my elbow, and wondering what your silence means. I intreat you once more to put an end to these speculations, which cost me more animal spirits than I can spare; if you cannot, without great trouble to yourself, which in your situation may very possibly be the case, contrive opportunities of writing so frequently as usual, only say it, and I am content. I will wait, if you desire it, as long for every letter, but then let them arrive at the period once fixed, exactly at the time, for my patience will not hold out an hour beyond it.*

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb 1, 1788.

Pardon me, my dearest Cousin, the mournful ditty that I sent you last. There are times when I see every thing through a medium that distresses me to an insupportable degree, and that letter was written in one of them. A fog, that had for three days obliterated all the beauties of Weston, and a north-east wind, might possibly contribute not a little to

* This letter proves how much the sensitive mind of Cowper was liable to be ruffled by external incidents. Life presents too many real sources of anxiety, to justify us in adding those which are imaginary and of our own creation.

the melancholy that indited it. But my mind is now easy; your letter has made it so, and I feel myself as blithe as a bird in comparison. I love you, my Cousin, and cannot suspect, either with or without cause, the least evil in which you may be concerned, without being greatly troubled! Oh, trouble! The portion of all mortals—but mine in particular. Would I had never known thee, or could bid thee farewell for ever; for I meet thee at every turn: my pillows are stuffed with thee, my very roses smell of thee, and even my Cousin, who would cure me of all trouble if she could, is sometimes innocently the cause of trouble to me.

I now see the unreasonableness of my late trouble, and would, if I could trust myself so far, promise never again to trouble either myself or you in the same manner, unless warranted by some more substantial ground of apprehension.

What I said concerning Homer, my dear, was spoken, or rather written, merely under the influence of a certain jocularity that I felt at that moment. I am in reality so far from thinking myself an ass, and my translation a sand-cart, that I rather seem, in my own account of the matter, one of those flaming steeds harnessed to the chariot of Apollo, of which we read in the works of the ancients. I have lately, I know not how, acquired a certain superiority to myself in this business, and in this last revisal have elevated the expression to a degree far surpassing its former boast. A few evenings since, I had an opportunity to try how far I might venture to expect such success of my labours as can alone repay them,

by reading the first book of my Iliad to a friend of ours. He dined with you once at Olney. His name is Greatheed, a man of letters and of taste. He dined with us, and, the evening proving dark and dirty, we persuaded him to take a bed. I entertained him as I tell you. He heard me with great attention, and with evident symptoms of the highest satisfaction, which, when I had finished the exhibition, he put out of all doubt by expressions which I cannot repeat. Only this he said to Mrs. Unwin, while I was in another room, that he had never entered into the spirit of Homer before, nor had any thing like a due conception of his manner. This I have said, knowing that it will please you, and will now say no more.

Adieu! my dear, will you never speak of coming to Weston more?

W. C.

Mrs. King, to whom the following letter is addressed, was the wife of Dr. King, Rector of Perten-hall, near Kimbolton, and a connexion of the late Professor Martyn, well known for his botanical researches. The perusal of Cowper's Poems had been the means of conveying impressions of piety to her mind; and it was to record her gratitude, and to cultivate his acquaintance, that she wrote a letter, to which this is the reply.

TO MRS. KING, PERTEN HALL, NEAR KIMBOLTON, HUNTS.*

Weston Lodge, Feb. 12, 1788.

Dear Madam—A letter from a lady who was once intimate with my brother could not fail of being most acceptable to me. I lost him just in the moment when those truths which have recommended my volumes to your approbation were become his daily sustenance, as they had long been mine. But the will of God was done. I have sometimes thought that had his life been spared, being made brothers by a stricter tie than ever in the bonds of the same faith, hope, and love, we should have been happier in each other than it was in the power of mere natural affection to make us. But it was his blessing to be taken from a world in which he had no longer any wish to continue, and it will be mine, if, while I dwell in it, my time may not be altogether wasted. In order to effect that good end, I wrote what I am happy to find it has given you pleasure to read. But for that pleasure, madam, you are indebted neither to me, nor to my Muse; but (as you are well aware) to Him who alone can make divine truths palatable, in whatever vehicle conveyed. It is an established philosophical axiom, that nothing can communicate what it has not in itself; but, in the effects of Christian communion, a very strong exception is found to this general rule, however self-evident it may seem. A man himself

* Private Correspondence.

destitute of all spiritual consolation may, by occasion, impart it to others. Thus I, it seems, who wrote those very poems to amuse a mind oppressed with melancholy, and who have myself derived from them no other benefit, (for mere success in authorship will do me no good,) have nevertheless, by so doing, comforted others, at the same time that they administer to me no consolation. But I will proceed no farther in this strain, lest my prose should damp a pleasure that my verse has happily excited. On the contrary, I will endeavour to rejoice in your joy, and especially because I have been myself the instrument of conveying it.

Since the receipt of your obliging letter, I have naturally had recourse to my recollection, to try if it would furnish me with the name that I find at the bottom of it. At the same time I am aware that there is nothing more probable than that my brother might be honoured with your friendship without mentioning it to me; for, except a very short period before his death, we lived necessarily at a considerable distance from each other. Ascribe it, madam, not to an impertinent curiosity, but to a desire of better acquaintance with you, if I take the liberty to ask (since ladies' names, at least, are changeable,) whether yours was at that time the same as now.

Sincerely wishing you all happiness, and especially that which I am sure you covet most, the happiness which is from above, I remain, dear madam—early as it may seem to say it,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, Feb. 14, 1788.

Dear Sir—Though it be long since I received your last, I have not yet forgotten the impression it made upon me, nor how sensibly I felt myself obliged by your unreserved and friendly communications. I will not apologize for my silence in the interim, because, apprized as you are of my present occupation, the excuse that I might allege will present itself to you of course, and to dilate upon it would therefore be waste of paper.

You are in possession of the best security imaginable for the due improvement of your time, which is a just sense of its value. Had I been, when at your age, as much affected by that important consideration as I am at present, I should not have devoted, as I did, all the earliest parts of my life to amusement only. I am now in the predicament into which the thoughtlessness of youth betrays nine-tenths of mankind, who never discover that the health and good spirits which generally accompany it are in reality blessings only according to the use we make of them, till advanced years begin to threaten them with the loss of both. How much wiser would thousands have been than now they ever will be, had a puny constitution, or some occasional infirmity, constrained them to devote those hours to study and reflection, which for want of some such check they had given entirely to dissipation! I, therefore, account you happy, who, young as you are, need not be informed that you

cannot always be so, and who already know that the materials upon which age can alone build its comfort should be brought together at an earlier period. You have indeed, in losing a father, lost a friend, but you have not lost his instructions. His example was not buried with him, but happily for you (happily because you are desirous to avail yourself of it) still lives in your remembrance, and is cherished in your best affections.

Your last letter was dated from the house of a gentleman, who was, I believe, my schoolfellow. For the Mr. C——, who lived at Watford, while I had any connexion with Hertfordshire, must have been the father of the present, and, according to his age and the state of his health when I saw him last, must have been long dead. I never was acquainted with the family further than by report, which always spoke honourably of them, though, in all my journeys to and from my father's, I must have passed the door. The circumstance however reminds me of the beautiful reflection of Glaucus in the sixth Iliad; beautiful as well for the affecting nature of the observation as for the justness of the comparison and the incomparable simplicity of the expression. I feel that I shall not be satisfied without transcribing it, and yet perhaps *my* Greek may be difficult to decipher.

Οιη περ φυλλων γενεη, τοιηδε και ανδρων.
Φυλλα τα μεν τ' ανεμος χαμαδις χεει, αλλα δε θ' υλη
Τηλεθοωσα φυει, εαρος δ' επιγιγνεται ωρη.
Ως ανδρων γενεη, η μεν φυει, η δ' απολλυει.*

* We insert Pope's translation, as being the most familiar to the reader:

Excuse this piece of pedantry in a man whose Homer is always before him! What would I give that he were living now and within my reach! I, of all men living, have the best excuse for indulging such a wish, unreasonable as it may seem; for I have no doubt that the fire of his eye, and the smile of his lips, would put me now and then in possession of his full meaning more effectually than any commentator. I return you many thanks for the elegies which you sent me, both which I think deserving of much commendation. I should requite you but ill by sending you my mortuary verses, neither at present can I prevail on myself to do it, having no frank, and being conscious that they are not worth carriage without one. I have one copy left, and that copy I will keep for you.

W. C.

The public mind was deeply interested in the subject of the slave trade—that nefarious system, which was once characterised in the House of Lords, by Bishop Horsley, as "the greatest moral pestilence that ever withered the happiness of mankind." The honour of introducing this momentous question, in which the interests of humanity and justice were

"Like leaves on trees the race of man is found,
Now green in youth, now withering on the ground;
Another race the following spring supplies,
They fall successive, and successive rise:
So generations in their course decay,
So flourish these, when those have pass'd away."

Pope's Version.

so deeply involved, was reserved for William Wilberforce, Esq. How he executed that task is too well known to require either detail or panegyric. The final abolition of the slave trade was an era in the history of Great Britain, never to be forgotten; and the subsequent legislative enactments for abolishing slavery itself completed what was wanting, in this noble triumph of national benevolence.

The following letter alludes to this interesting subject.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 16, 1788.

I have now three letters of yours, my dearest Cousin, before me, all written in the space of a week; and must be indeed insensible of kindness did I not feel yours on this occasion. I cannot describe to you, neither could you comprehend it if I should, the manner in which my mind is sometimes impressed with melancholy on particular subjects. Your late silence was such a subject. I heard, saw, and felt, a thousand terrible things, which had no real existence, and was haunted by them night and day, till they at last extorted from me the doleful epistle which I have since wished had been burned before I sent it. But the cloud has passed, and, as far as you are concerned, my heart is once more at rest.

Before you gave me the hint, I had once or twice, as I lay on my bed, watching the break of day, ruminated on the subject which, in your last but one, you recommended to me.

Slavery, or a release from slavery, such as the poor negroes have endured, or perhaps both these topics together, appeared to me a theme so important at the present juncture, and at the same time so susceptible of poetical management, that I more than once perceived myself ready to start in that career, could I have allowed myself to desert Homer for so long a time as it would have cost me to do them justice.

While I was pondering these things, the public prints informed me that Miss More was on the point of publication, having actually finished what I had not yet begun.*

The sight of her advertisement convinced me that my best course would be that to which I felt myself most inclined, to persevere without turning aside to attend to any other call, however alluring, in the business I have in hand.

It occurred to me likewise, that I have already borne my testimony in favour of my black brethren, and that I was one of the earliest, if not the first, of

* For the gratification of those who are not in possession of this poem, we insert the following extract.

"Whene'er to Afric's shores I turn my eyes,
Horrors of deepest, deadliest guilt arise;
I see by more than Fancy's mirror shown,
The burning village and the blazing town:
See the dire victim torn from social life,
The shrieking babe, the agonizing wife!
* * * *
By felon hands, by one relentless stroke,
See the fond links of feeling nature broke!

those, who have in the present day expressed their detestation of the diabolical traffic in question.*

The fibres twisting round a parent's heart
Torn from their grasp, and bleeding as they part."

We add one more passage, as it contains an animated appeal against the injustice of this nefarious traffic.

" What wrongs, what injuries does Oppression plead,
To smooth the crime, and sanctify the deed?
What strange offence, what aggravated sin?
They stand convicted—of a darker skin!
Barbarians, hold! th' opprobrious commerce spare,
Respect His sacred image which they bear.
Tho' dark and savage, ignorant and blind,
They claim the common privilege of kind;
Let Malice strip them of each other plea,
They still are men, and men should still be free."
See Mrs. More's Poem, entitled *The Slave Trade.*

* With respect to the claim of priority, or who first denounced the injustice and horrors of slavery, we believe the following is a correct historical narrative on this important subject.

The celebrated De Las Casas (born at Seville in 1474, and who accompanied Columbus in his voyage in 1493) was so deeply impressed with the cruelties and oppressions of slavery, that he returned to Europe, and pleaded the cause of humanity before the Emperor Charles V. This prince was so far moved by his representations as to pass royal ordinances to mitigate the evil; but his intentions were unhappily defeated. The Rev. Morgan Godwyn, a Welshman, is the next in order. About the middle of the last century, John Woolman and Anthony Beneret, belonging to the society of Friends, endeavoured to rouse the public attention. In 1754, the Society itself took up the cause with so much zeal and success, that there is not at this day a single slave in the possession of any acknowledged Quaker in Pennsylvania. In 1776, Granville Sharp addressed to the British public his " Just Limi-

On all these accounts I judged it best to be ilent and especially because I cannot doubt that ome effectual measures will now be taken to alle- iate the miseries of their condition, the whole ation being in possession of the case, and it being npossible also to allege an argument in behalf of ıan-merchandise that can deserve a hearing. I hould be glad to see Hannah More's poem; she is favourite writer with me, and has more nerve and :nergy both in her thoughts and language than ıalf the he-rhymers in the kingdom. The "Thoughts ın the manners of the Great" will likewise be most ıcceptable. I want to learn as much of the world ıs I can, but to acquire that learning at a distance;

:ation of Slavery," his "Essay on Slavery," and his "Law ɔf Retribution, or a Serious Warning to Great Britain and her Colonies." The poet Shenstone also wrote an elegy on the subject beginning,

"See the poor native quit the Lybian shores," &c. &c.

Ramsey and Clarkson bring down the list to the time of Cowper, whose indignant muse in 1782 poured forth his detestation of this traffic in his poem on Charity, an extract of which we shall shortly lay before the reader. The distinguished honour was, however, reserved for Thomas Clarkson, to be the instrument of first engaging the zeal and eloquence of Mr. Wilberforce in the great cause of the abolition of the Slave Trade. The persevering exertions of Mr. Fowell Buxton and those of the Anti-Slavery Society achieved the final triumph, and led to the great legislative enactment which abolished slavery itself in the British Colonies; and nothing now remains but to associate France, the Brazils, and America in the noble enterprize of proclaiming the blessings of liberty to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

and a book with such a title promises fair to serve the purpose effectually.

I recommend it to you, my dear, by all means to embrace the fair occasion, and to put yourself in the way of being squeezed and incommoded a few hours, for the sake of hearing and seeing what you will never have an opportunity to see and hear hereafter, the trial of a man who has been greater and more feared than the Great Mogul himself. Whatever we are at home, we have certainly been tyrants in the East, and if these men have, as they are charged, rioted in the miseries of the innocent, and dealt death to the guiltless, with an unsparing hand, may they receive a retribution that shall in future make all governors and judges of ours, in those distant regions, tremble. While I speak thus, I equally wish them acquitted. They were both my school-fellows, and for Hastings I had a particular value. Farewell.*

W. C.

* The trial of Warren Hastings excited universal interest, from the official rank of the accused, as Governor General of India, the number and magnitude of the articles of impeachment, the splendour of the scene, (which was in Westminster Hall,) and the impassioned eloquence of Mr. Burke, who conducted the prosecution. The proceedings were protracted for seven successive years, when Mr. Hastings was finally acquitted. He is said to have incurred an expence of £30,000 on this occasion, a painful proof of the costly character and delays of British jurisprudence. Some of the highest specimens of eloquence that ever adorned any age or country were delivered during this trial; among which ought to be specified the address of the celebrated Mr. Sheridan, who captivated the attention of the assembly in a speech of three hours and a

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 22, 1788.

I do not wonder that your ears and feelings were hurt by Mr. Burke's severe invective. But you are to know, my dear, or probably you know it already, that the prosecution of public delinquents has always, and in all countries, been thus conducted. The style of a criminal charge of this kind has been an affair settled among orators from the days of Tully to the present, and, like all other practices that have obtained for ages, this in particular seems to have been founded originally in reason and in the necessity of the case.

He who accuses another to the state must not appear himself unmoved by the view of crimes with which he charges him, lest he should be suspected of fiction, or of precipitancy, or of a consciousness that after all he shall not be able to prove his allegations. On the contrary, in order to impress the minds of his hearers with a persuasion that he himself at least is convinced of the criminality of the prisoner, he must be vehement, energetic, rapid; must call him tyrant, and traitor, and every thing else that is odious, and all this to his face, because

half, distinguished by all the graces and powers of the most finished oratory. At the close of this speech, Mr. Pitt rose and proposed an adjournment, observing that they were then too much under the influence of the wand of the enchanter to be capable of exercising the functions of a sound and deliberate judgment.

all this, bad as it is, is no more than he undertakes to prove in the sequel, and if he cannot prove it he must himself appear in a light very little more desirable, and at the best to have trifled with the tribunal to which he has summoned him.

Thus Tully, in the very first sentence of his oration against Catiline, calls him a monster; a manner of address in which he persisted till said monster, unable to support the fury of his accuser's eloquence any longer, rose from his seat, elbowed for himself a passage through the crowd, and at last burst from the senate house in an agony, as if the Furies themselves had followed him.

And now, my dear, though I have thus spoken, and have seemed to plead the cause of that species of eloquence which you, and every creature who has your sentiments, must necessarily dislike, perhaps I am not altogether convinced of its propriety. Perhaps, at the bottom, I am much more of opinion, that if the charge, unaccompanied by any inflammatory matter, and simply detailed, being once delivered into the court, and read aloud, the witnesses were immediately examined, and sentence pronounced according to the evidence, not only the process would be shortened, much time and much expense saved, but justice would have at least as fair play as now she has. Prejudice is of no use in weighing the question, guilty or not guilty, and the principal aim, end, and effect of such introductory harangues is to create as much prejudice as possible. When you and I, therefore, shall have

the sole management of such a business entrusted to us, we will order it otherwise.

I was glad to learn from the papers that our cousin Henry shone as he did in reading the charge. This must have given much pleasure to the General.†

Thy ever affectionate,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston, March 1, 1788.

My dear Friend—That my letters may not be exactly an echo to those which I receive, I seldom read a letter immediately before I answer it; trusting to my memory to suggest to me such of its contents as may call for particular notice. Thus I dealt with your last, which lay in my desk, while I was writing to you. But my memory, or rather my recollection, failed me, in that instance. I had not forgotten Mr. Bean's letter, nor my obligations to you for the communication of it: but they did not happen to present themselves to me in the proper moment, nor till some hours after my own had been dispatched. I now return it, with many

† The Poet addressed some complimentary verses on this occasion to Mr. Henry Cowper, beginning thus:—

"Cowper, whose silver voice, tasked sometimes hard," &c.

Henry Cowper, Esq. was reading clerk in the House of Lords.

* Private Correspondence.

thanks for so favourable a specimen of its author. That he is a good man, and a wise man, its testimony proves sufficiently; and I doubt not, that when he shall speak for himself he will be found an agreeable one. For it is possible to be very good, and in many respects very wise; yet at the same time not the most delightful companion. Excuse the shortness of an occasional scratch, which I send in much haste; and believe me, my dear friend, with our united love to yourself and Mrs. Newton, of whose health we hope to hear a more favourable account as the year rises,

Your truly affectionate,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Weston Lodge, March 3, 1788.†

My dear Friend—I had not, as you may imagine, read more than two or three lines of the enclosed, before I perceived that I had accidentally come to the possession of another man's property; who, by the same misadventure, has doubtless occupied mine. I accordingly folded it again the moment after having opened it, and now return it. The bells of Olney, both last night and this morning, have announced the arrival of Mr. Bean. I understand that he is

* Private Correspondence.

† The date having been probably written on the latter half of this letter, which is torn off, the editor has endeavoured to supply it from the following to Mrs. King.

now come with his family. It will not be long, therefore, before we shall be acquainted. I rather wish than hope that he may find himself comfortably situated; but the parishioners' admiration of Mr. C——, whatever the bells may say, is no good omen. It is hardly to be expected that the same people should admire both.

I have lately been engaged in a correspondence with a lady whom I never saw. She lives at Pertenhall, near Kimbolton, and is the wife of a Dr. King, who has the living. She is evidently a Christian, and a very gracious one. I would that she had you for a correspondent rather than me. One letter from you would do her more good than a ream of mine. But so it is; and, since I cannot depute my office to you, and am bound by all sorts of considerations to answer her this evening, I must necessarily quit you that I may have time to do it.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

Weston Lodge, March 3, 1788.

I owe you many acknowledgments, dear madam, for that unreserved communication both of your history and of your sentiments with which you favoured me in your last. It gives me great pleasure to learn that you are so happily circumstanced, both in respect of situation and frame of mind. With your view of religious subjects, you could not, in-

* Private Correspondence.

deed, speaking properly, be pronounced unhappy in any circumstances; but to have received from above not only that faith which reconciles the heart to affliction, but many outward comforts also, and especially that greatest of all earthly comforts, a comfortable home, is happiness indeed. May you long enjoy it! As to health or sickness, you have learned already their true value, and know well that the former is no blessing, unless it be sanctified, and that the latter is one of the greatest we can receive, when we are enabled to make a proper use of it.

There is nothing in my story that can possibly be worth your knowledge; yet, lest I should seem to treat you with a reserve which at your hands I have not experienced, such as it is, I will relate it.—I was bred to the law; a profession to which I was never much inclined, and in which I engaged rather because I was desirous to gratify a most indulgent father, than because I had any hope of success in it myself. I spent twelve years in the Temple, where I made no progress in that science, to cultivate which I was sent thither. During this time my father died; not long after him died my mother-in-law: and at the expiration of it, a melancholy seized me, which obliged me to quit London, and consequently to renounce the bar. I lived some time at St. Alban's. After having suffered in that place long and extreme affliction, the storm was suddenly dispelled, and the same day-spring from on high which has arisen upon you, arose on me also. I spent eight years in the enjoyment of it; and have, ever since the expiration of those eight years, been oc-

casionally the prey of the same melancholy as at first. In the depths of it I wrote "The Task," and the volume which preceded it; and in the same deeps I am now translating Homer. But to return to St. Alban's. I abode there a year and half. Thence I went to Cambridge, where I spent a short time with my brother, in whose neighbourhood I determined, if possible, to pass the remainder of my days. He soon found a lodging for me at Huntingdon. At that place I had not resided long, when I was led to an intimate connexion with a family of the name of Unwin. I soon quitted my lodging, and took up my abode with them. I had not lived long under their roof, when Mr. Unwin, as he was riding one Sunday morning to his cure at Gravely, was thrown from his horse; of which fall he died. Mrs. Unwin, having the same views of the gospel as myself, and being desirous of attending a purer ministration of it than was to be found at Huntingdon, removed to Olney, where Mr. Newton was at that time the preacher, and I with her. There we continued till Mr. Newton, whose family was the only one in the place with which we could have a connexion, and with whom we lived always on the most intimate terms, left it. After his departure, finding the situation no longer desirable, and our house threatening to fall upon our heads, we removed hither. Here we have a good house in a most beautiful village, and, for the greatest part of the year, a most agreeable neighbourhood. Like you, madam, I stay much at home, and have not

travelled twenty miles from this place and its environs more than once these twenty years.

All this I have written, not for the singularity of the matter, as you will perceive, but partly for the reason which I gave at the outset, and partly that, seeing we are become correspondents, we may know as much of each other as we can, and that as soon as possible.

I beg, madam, that you will present my best respects to Mr. King, whom, together with yourself, should you at any time hereafter take wing for a longer flight than usual, we shall be happy to receive at Weston; and believe me, dear madam, his and your obliged and affectionate,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, March 3, 1788.

One day last week, Mrs. Unwin and I, having taken our morning walk, and returning homeward through the Wilderness, met the Throckmortons. A minute after we had met them, we heard the cry of hounds at no great distance, and, mounting the broad stump of an elm, which had been felled, and by the aid of which we were enabled to look over the wall, we saw them. They were all at that time in our orchard: presently we heard a terrier, belonging to Mrs. Throckmorton, which you may remember by the name of Fury, yelping with much vehemence, and saw her running through the thickets within a few yards of us at her utmost speed, as if

in pursuit of something which we doubted not was the fox. Before we could reach the other end of the Wilderness, the hounds entered also; and when we arrived at the gate which opens into the grove, there we found the whole weary cavalcade assembled. The huntsman, dismounting, begged leave to follow his hounds on foot, for he was sure, he said, that they had killed him—a conclusion which I suppose he drew from their profound silence. He was accordingly admitted, and, with a sagacity that would not have dishonoured the best hound in the world, pursuing precisely the same track which the fox and the dogs had taken, though he had never had a glimpse of either after their first entrance through the rails, arrived where he found the slaughtered prey. He soon produced dead reynard, and rejoined us in the grove with all his dogs about him. Having an opportunity to see a ceremony, which I was pretty sure would never fall in my way again, I determined to stay and to notice all that passed with the most minute attention. The huntsman having, by the aid of a pitchfork, lodged reynard on the arm of an elm, at the height of about nine feet from the ground, there left him for a considerable time. The gentlemen sat on their horses contemplating the fox, for which they had toiled so hard; and the hounds, assembled at the foot of the tree, with faces not less expressive of the most rational delight, contemplated the same object. The huntsman remounted; cut off a foot, and threw it to the hounds—one of them swallowed it whole like a bolus. He then once more alighted, and, drawing

down the fox by the hinder legs, desired the people, who were by this time rather numerous, to open a lane for him to the right and left. He was instantly obeyed, when, throwing the fox to the distance of some yards, and screaming like a fiend, "tear him to pieces," at least six times repeatedly, he consigned him over absolutely to the pack, who in a few minutes devoured him completely. Thus, my dear, as Virgil says, what none of the gods could have ventured to promise me, time itself, pursuing its accustomed course, has of its own accord presented me with. I have been in at the death of a fox, and you now know as much of the matter as I, who am as well informed as any sportsman in England.

Yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, March 12, 1788.

Slavery, and the Manners of the Great, I have read. The former I admired, as I do all that Miss More writes, as well for energy of expression, as for the tendency of the design. I have never yet seen any production of her pen that has not recommended itself by both these qualifications. There is likewise much good sense in her manner of treating every subject, and no mere poetic cant (which is the thing that I abhor) in her manner of treating any. And this I say, not because you now know and visit her, but it has long been my avowed opinion of

her works, which I have both spoken and written, as often as I have had occasion to mention them.*

Mr. Wilberforce's little book (if he was the author of it) has also charmed me. It must, I should imagine, engage the notice of those to whom it is addressed. In that case one may say to them, either answer it or be set down by it. They will do neither, They will approve, commend, and forget it. Such has been the fate of all exhortations to reform, whether in prose or verse, and however closely pressed upon the conscience, in all ages: here and there a happy individual, to whom God gives grace and wisdom to profit by the admonition, is the better for it. But the aggregate body (as Gilbert Cooper used to call the multitude) remain, though with a very good understanding of the matter, like horse and mule that have none.

We shall now soon lose our neighbours at the Hall. We shall truly miss them and long for their return. Mr. Throckmorton said to me last night,

* We here beg particularly to recommend the perusal of the Memoirs of Mrs. Hannah More. They are replete with peculiar interest, not only in detailing the history of her own life, and the incidents connected with her numerous and valuable productions, but as elucidating the character of the times in which she lived, and exhibiting a lively portrait of the distinguished literary persons with whom she associated. The Blue Stocking Club, or "Bas bleus," is minutely described—we are present at its coteries, introduced to its personages, and familiar with its manners and habits. The Montagus, the Boscawens, the Veseys, the Carters, and the Pepyses, all pass in review before us; and prove how conversation might be made subservient to the improvement of the intellect and the enlargement of the heart, if both were cultivated to answer *these exalted ends.*

with sparkling eyes, and a face expressive of the highest pleasure—"We compared you this morning with Pope; we read your fourth Iliad, and his, and I verily think we shall beat him. He has many superfluous lines, and does not interest one. When I read your translation, I am deeply affected. I see plainly your advantage, and am convinced that Pope spoiled all by attempting the work in rhyme." His brother George, who is my most active amanuensis, and who indeed first introduced the subject, seconded all he said. More would have passed, but, Mrs. Throckmorton having seated herself at the harpsichord, and for my amusement merely, my attention was of course turned to her. The new vicar of Olney is arrived, and we have exchanged visits.* He is a plain, sensible man, and pleases me much. A treasure for Olney, if Olney can understand his value.

W. C.

The public mind, inflamed by details of the most revolting atrocities, which characterised the Slave Trade, became daily more agitated on this important subject, and impressed with a sense of its cruelty and injustice. To strengthen the ardour of these generous feelings, the relatives of Cowper solicited the co-operation of his pen, which was already known to have employed its powers in the vindication of oppressed Africa.† General Cowper, among others, suggested that the composition of songs or ballads, written in the simplicity peculiar

* The Rev. Mr. Bean. † See Poem on Charity.

to that style of poetry, and adapted to popular airs, might perhaps be the most efficient mode of promoting the interests of the cause. The Poet lost no time in complying with this solicitation, and composed three ballads, one of which he transmitted to the General, with the following letter. Their insertion will form an appropriate conclusion to this volume.

TO GENERAL COWPER.

Weston, 1788.

My dear General—A letter is not pleasant which excites curiosity, but does not gratify it. Such a letter was my last, the defects of which I therefore take the first opportunity to supply. When the condition of our negroes in the islands was first presented to me as a subject for songs, I felt myself not at all allured to the undertaking; it seemed to offer only images of horror, which could by no means be accommodated to the style of that sort of composition. But, having a desire to comply, if possible, with the request made to me, after turning the matter in my mind as many ways as I could, I at last, as I told you, produced three, and that which appears to myself the best of those three I have sent you. Of the other two, one is serious, in a strain of thought perhaps rather too serious, and I could not help it. The other, of which the slave-trader is himself the subject, is somewhat ludicrous. If I could think them worth your seeing, I would, as opportunity should occur, send them also. If this amuses you I shall be glad.

W. C.

THE MORNING DREAM, A BALLAD.

*To the tune of "Tweed Side."**

'Twas in the glad season of spring,
  Asleep at the dawn of the day,
I dream'd what I cannot but sing,
  So pleasant it seem'd as I lay.
I dream'd that on ocean afloat,
  Far hence to the westward I sail'd,
While the billows high lifted the boat,
  And the fresh blowing breeze never fail'd

In the steerage a woman I saw,
  Such at least was the form that she wore,
Whose beauty impress'd me with awe,
  Ne'er taught me by woman before:
She sat, and a shield at her side
  Shed light like a sun on the waves,
And, smiling divinely, she cried—
  "I go to make freemen of slaves."

Then, raising her voice to a strain,
  The sweetest that ear ever heard,
She sung of the slave's broken chain
  Wherever her glory appear'd.
Some clouds which had over us hung
  Fled, chas'd by her melody clear,
And methought, while she liberty sung,
  'Twas liberty only to hear.

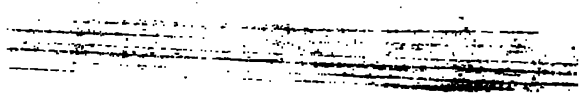
Thus swiftly dividing the flood,
  To a slave-cultured island we came,
Where a demon, her enemy, stood,
  Oppression his terrible name:

* These verses were set to a popular tune, for the purpose of general circulation, and to aid the efforts then making for the abolition of the slave trade.

In his hand, as a sign of his sway,
A scourge hung with lashes he bore,
And stood looking out for his prey,
From Africa's sorrowful shore.

But soon as, approaching the land,
That goddess-like woman he view'd,
The scourge he let fall from his hand,
With blood of his subjects imbrued.
I saw him both sicken and die,
And, the moment the monster expir'd,
Heard shouts that ascended the sky,
From thousands with rapture inspir'd.

Awaking, how could I but muse
At what such a dream should betide,
But soon my ear caught the glad news,
Which serv'd my weak thought for a guide—
That Britannia, renown'd o'er the waves,
For the hatred she ever has shown
To the black-sceptred rulers of slaves,
Resolves to have none of her own.

END OF VOL. III.

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